

Attitudes and Behaviors Regarding Sun Exposure of the Italian Population

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Introduction

Young Italians like a tanned look, increasing the risk of sunburn and subsequently increasing the risk of skin melanoma [1,2]. The aim of this study was to investigate attitudes and behaviors regarding sun exposure in a representative Italian population. The ALL PROJECT provides a survey on representative and extrapolatable samples of the general population aged 16 or more of 20 countries (Italy, 4001) [3]. Since the study used anonymized data and did not involve any clinical examination, institutional ethics committee approvals were not required.

Case Presentation

Descriptive analyses using absolute and percentage frequencies were performed. For constant variables mean and median and estimates of dispersion (standard deviation, range)

were calculated. The test of significance was two-sided and established at 5% ($P \leq 0.05$). Z Pearson Chi-square was performed. A total of 1988 (49.7%) males and 2013 (50.3%) females (mean age 46.79 +/- 15.80 [16-92 years]) were included; 83.8% (3354/4000) were identified as fair skin according to the Fitzpatrick classification. Of all respondents, 23.3% reported no sun exposure, 36.6% admitted exposure before 11 am, 28.8% exclusively after 4 pm, and 1787 (44.7%) reported exposure to the sun between 11 am and 4 pm.

The most frequent reason for this risky behavior (among those who say they were familiar with public health recommendations) was the advantage (34.7%) and the availability (44.7%) for their activities in these hours; 81.9% (3278/4001) declared being aware of public health experts' recommendations against exposure between 11 am and 4 pm. Respondents who sunbathed between 11 am and 4 pm were as well informed of these recommendations as other

patients (80.6% versus 83.0%, P 0.53). Of the individuals who asserted to having been exposed to the sun, 80.5% declared that they had used sunscreens during the sunniest period (37.6% every 2 hours and 42.9% more irregularly and less frequently). The motivation of those who wore sunscreens was mainly the wish to avoid sunburn (67.5%) and to reduce the risk of skin cancer (54.5%). The 598 (19.5%) respondents who did not wear sunscreens explained their behavior by saying that they considered the topical application tedious (24.5%) and because they did not think about it (48,2%).

Conclusions

This study shows that, despite widespread dissemination of public health messages about the importance of sun protection, we need an effective education policy, and more

targeted methods should be developed to prevent skin cancer, with an additional education program among high-risk skin cancer patients to change their behavior.

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