

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIORS OF TIRANA POPULATION TOWARD SUN PROTECTION AND THEIR PERCEPTION ABOUT MELANOMA

**Ermira VASILI¹, Entela SHKODRANI¹,
Loreta KUNESHKA², Iris HOXHA¹,
Sidita BORIÇI¹, Elna ÇANO¹, Brikena BEZATI¹**

¹ Infective-Dermatology Department, University Hospital Center "Mother Teresa",

² Department of Statistics, University of Tirana, Faculty of Public Health

Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study is to determine the knowledge and attitudes of Albanian population toward sun protection, their sun behavior patterns and also their knowledge about melanoma.

Methods: The study was conducted in the time period January- June 2012. Participants were asked to fill in an anonymous and self-administered questionnaire composed of 22 questions on the basic socio-demographic data, age, gender, profession, place of residence (urban/rural area), education, skin/hair/eye color, sunburns during childhood, presence and the number of moles, sunscreen use, SPF (Sun Protection Factor), artificial tanning lamps/ beds/ cabins attendance, knowledge about melanoma and its risk factors, the source of information about it, family history of melanoma, protective measures taken when staying in the sun and their relationship with sunbathing. SPSS 17.0 was used for data analysis.

Results: The study included a total of 2035 subjects: 61.9% females and 38.1% males. A considerable percentage of subjects had no knowledge about melanoma (59.5%) and those claiming to know about it based their knowledge on TV, internet and school as the main sources of information. 38.9% of subjects had no knowledge on Sun Protective Factors (SPF) on sunscreens; 33.9% of them used sunscreens with a maximum SPF of 20 and only 27.2% used sunscreens with a SPF greater than 20.

Conclusions: The results of this study show that the knowledge, attitude and behaviors of Albanian population to sun protection and melanoma are insufficient.

Key words: attitudes of Albanian population, melanoma, sun protection.

Introduction

Epidemiological studies have shown that sunlight is the most important environmental factor responsible for the development of cutaneous melanoma, the other types of skin cancer and many other skin diseases (1). It is estimated that 80% of total lifetime exposure of an individual is received during the first 20 years of life (2). Cutaneous melanoma is the most serious oncological problem in dermatology with its incidence and mortality having been increased in the last decades. Unlike other types of skin cancer, melanoma affects relatively the young and it has the tendency to metastasize at an early stage (3). Although melanoma makes only 3% of all skin cancers, it is responsible for more than 75% of deaths occurring from it (4). In Albania, skin cancer ranks as the first in mortality in males and the second after breast cancer in females (5). Excessive sunlight exposure and ultraviolet radiation (UV) are the most important avoidable risk factors for skin cancer, including melanoma (6). Awareness of individuals on sun protection is the first preventive measure that should be taken to decrease the incidence of these diseases (7). The aim of this study is to determine the knowledge and attitudes of Albanian population, their sun behavior patterns and also their knowledge regarding melanoma.

Materials and methods

This quantitative cross-sectional KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice) survey was designed to investigate the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to sun protection and other factors related to melanoma risk increase in Tirana inhabitants. The target population was the urban and rural population of Tirana City and its suburbs, students of "Petro Nini Luarasi", "Cajupi" and "Harry Fultz" high schools, students of Tirana University and randomly selected adults. The participation criteria included the age above 17 years old, Albanian citizenship and willingness to participate in the study. Individuals not fitting these criteria were