COMMENTARY

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Made for the Shade
The Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition Celebrates Its Ten Year History

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Background

Health professionals in Hawaii have the opportunity to deliver one of the most powerful and effective cancer prevention messages to their clients - protect yourselves against skin cancer. For over ten years the mission of the Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition has been to provide health professionals and the public with clear, concise information on the prevention, early detection, and effective treatment of skin cancer that is based upon current and accurate information. Towards this end the Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition has developed many unique and innovative health education and research projects to promote sun protection in Hawaii.

Since the first meeting in 1995 of the Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition's founding organizations, including the American Cancer Society, the Hawaii Department of Health, and the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service, the Coalition has worked towards making sun protection behavior common in Hawaii. During the past decade the coalition has grown into a group consisting of over 20 partner agencies, including the Hawaii Dermatological Society, the University of Hawaii Cancer Research Center, the Hawaii Lifeguard Association, Galderma Pharmaceuticals, St. Francis Hospital, Kuakini Health System, the Hawaii Ophthalmologic Society, the Hawaii Optometric Association, the Dermatology Nurses Association-Hawaii Chapter, the Hawaii Medical Service Association, Kaiser Permanente, and many private local businesses. All of these organizations share a common goal to help prevent skin cancer in Hawaii.

Projects

One of the first projects of the Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition was to leverage a partnership with the Hawaii Medical Service Association, and Kaiser Permanente Hawaii to obtain accurate baseline data on skin cancer in Hawaii. Basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers represent the most common types of cancer in the United States and Hawaii, and although they are usually not life threatening, these types of skin cancer pose serious threats to personal health and well-being (Wagner, 2000). Unlike most cancers, basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers are not reportable, and often are effectively treated in a physician's office without a biopsy (Scotto, 1996). As a result accurate data on the incidence and prevalence of skin cancer in Hawaii had been previously unavailable. The Coalition's partnership with these medical insurers enabled the Coalition to track skin cancer cases using the International Classification of Disease (ICD-9) codes for skin cancer treatments reimbursed by HMSA and Kaiser during the years 1999-2002 to determine a baseline prevalence of skin cancer. This project revealed that there are almost 8,000 annual cases of skin cancer treated each year in Hawaii, which provided evidence of the need to educate the public about the most preventable form of cancer (Glanz, 2005). The graph in Figure 1 describes the total number of diagnosed cases by ICD-9 codes of patients with either a primary or secondary diagnosis of non melanoma skin cancer (See FIGURE 1).

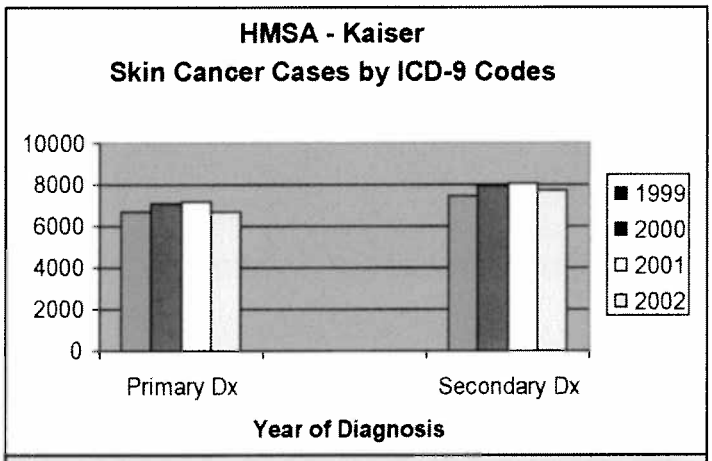

Figure 1

The Coalition partnered with the Hawaii Department of Health's Health Promotion & Education Branch in 1997 to develop television Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that were designed to educate populations about sun protection, including families with children, outdoor occupations, and the visitor industry. These award-winning television PSAs ran for a year and were featured on all three major broadcast television networks, the Japanese and Korean language TV stations, and the hotel industry's TV channel. As part of the Coalition's initiative to educate both visitors and Hawaii residents, a statewide visitor publication, Spotlight Hawaii magazine has featured a "Sunsmart- When You're in the Sun...Choose Your Cover" page in all of their islands publications. This page provides sun protection guidelines, including tips on how to handle sunburn. Spotlight magazine has provided this service since 1999 as a community service for Hawaii.

Beginning in 1997, the Hawaii Dermatological Association, the American Cancer Society, the Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition, and Longs Drug Stores have coordinated free skin cancer screenings during the month of May, which is National Skin Cancer Early De-

tection Month. Due to the wide success of this event, the Coalition expanded this project into a family-based venue designed to improve public knowledge about sun protection. In 1999, the first Hawaii Sun Protection Exposition was held at Windward Mall. As with the Longs Drug skin cancer screenings held previously, physician members of the Hawaii Dermatological Society provided free skin screenings to mall shoppers. In addition, during the Sun Protection Expo shoppers were also treated to mall stage performances from a wide range of local talent including hula and hip-hop dancers, local celebrities, and magicians. The Sun Protection Exhibition also offered free sun protection prizes including sun block and hats. Business exhibitors were invited that represented sun protection related items, e.g., sun block, UV protective apparel, eyeglass UV checks, and car window UV tinting. Finally, University of Hawaii medical students provided skin cancer education during the event.

This year the coalition will conduct its 6th Sun Protection Expo at Kahala Mall. Although the event seems like fun and games the event is actually well disguised research. Evaluation of the results of the various skin cancer screenings during the Longs Drugs and Sun Protection Expo events can provide a cross-sectional description of the risks for skin cancer. Forty four percent of the residents who were screened during the Sun Protection Expos were found to have a serious skin condition, including 84 cases of skin cancer, 11 of those cases were diagnosed as melanoma (See FIGURE 2). Although this project does not provide a population based estimate of the skin cancer risks in Hawaii, the project describes the problem and points to the need for more research.

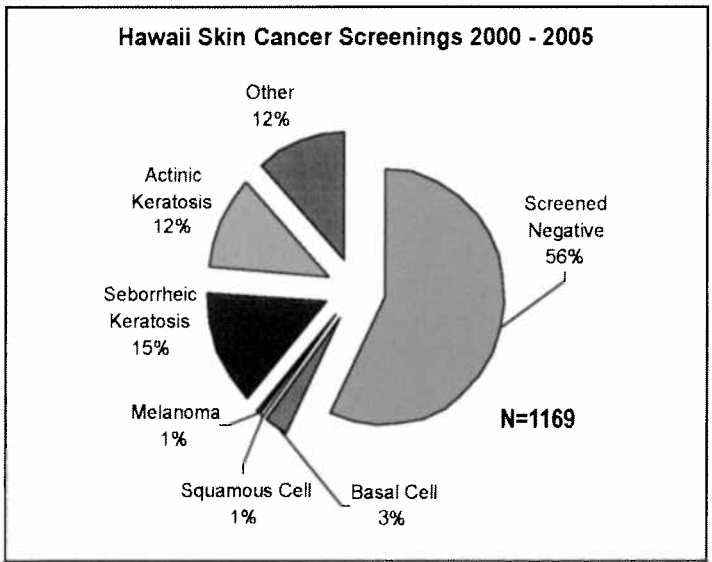

Figure 2

To improve assessment of skin cancer risks and preventative behavior in Hawaii, Dr. Raubane Kirimaua conducted a pilot Skin Cancer Screening Study in June 2003. This cross-sectional study was designed to determine baseline knowledge, behavior and attitudes about skin cancer, and sun protection among a small random sample of Hawaii residents. The study revealed that 87% of participants surveyed had some knowledge about skin cancer, with 77% of those that knew about skin cancer practicing regular preventative behaviors that included using sun block, wearing sun protective clothing, and avoiding peak sun exposure hours outdoors. Seven percent had a personal history of skin cancer and fifteen percent had a family history of skin cancer (See FIGURE 3). Although over 94% of the study participants had health insurance coverage only 10% had been screened by a physician for melanoma. Finally, among study participants, the most popular source of information about skin cancer was television (42%), with their physician ranking second (27%). Data from this analysis can guide further research and interventions to help Hawaii residents reduce their risks for skin cancer.

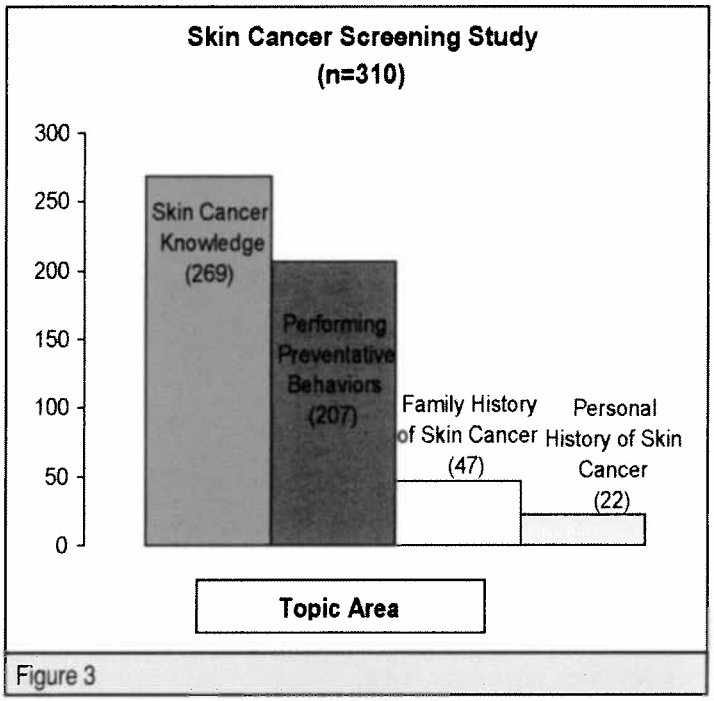

Figure 3

The current scientific evidence about skin cancer risks describes the importance of protecting children from over exposure to the sun. Not only should parents be aware of the need to help their children reduce their risk for cancer in later life, but also children can learn about the importance of sun protection, and develop sun protection behaviors themselves. SunSafe for Kids is an innovative educational project initiated in 2000 by Dr. Carla Nip-Sakamoto, then President of the Hawaii Dermatological Society. The project was conducted in partnership with Iolani School through the support of a major financial grant provided by the American Academy of Dermatology. The goal of the project was to enhance knowledge and understanding of sun protective behaviors, and to promote positive practices among children, parents, and educators with regard to sun exposure.

The program's content was developed by the physician members of the Hawaii Dermatological Society, the Hawaii Ophthalmologic Society, and also members of the Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition. Iolani students learned about the effects of sunlight, the ozone layer, individual risk for sunburn, sunscreen selection and application, use of sun protective clothing, and sun-smart behaviors. Also, parents received educational pamphlets which were sent home with each child. Sun protection education was provided to the Iolani students

in grades K – 2 during their regular science classes. The classes were taught by University of Hawaii, John A Burns School of Medicine students and were designed to be both fun and informative for the children. The project culminated in a "SunSafe for Kids Fair", where fun activities and games like "Skin Cancer Jeopardy" served to reinforce the knowledge attained by the children in the classes. This project proved successful by leading the faculty and administration at Iolani School to provide shaded play areas for the children, and to implement protective hats as part of the P.E. uniform at school. The Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition will continue to work to make sun protection behaviors as common as brushing your teeth. Future projects may involve the collaboration with University of Hawaii Cancer Research Center's Dr. David O'Riodan. Dr. O'Riodan's current research is focused on examining ways to improve the validity and reliability of behavioral assessments related to skin cancer prevention. Dr O'Riodan's work includes incorporating the use of multiple measures, both objective and self-report, to provide a more accurate indication of the sun protection behaviors. The Skin Cancer Coalition hopes to provide the linkages with organizational partners who can support this exciting research.

The Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition advocates year-round sun protection

The Coalition's Sun Protection Guidelines are endorsed by the Hawaii Dermatological Society and are:

I. Apply sunscreen and a lip balm with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 or more, 20 minutes before going out doors.

II. Use enough sunscreen. The average sized adult should use one ounce to adequately cover sun-exposed areas. Remember to cover ears, neck, hand, scalp, and lips.

III. Reapply sunscreens every two hours and immediately after swimming.

IV. Wear protective clothing such as sun hats, long pants and sleeves, and sunglasses that block 99% - 100% of UV radiation.

V. Seek shade. Whenever possible avoid exposure to the midday sun 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

VI. Regularly examine your skin for changes.

VII. Make an appointment for a yearly skin examination.

VIII. When possible keep infants less than six months old out of the sun. If exposure is unavoidable, apply sunscreen to areas of greatest sun exposure.

IX. Dress infants in broad brim hats and protective clothing.

X. Be sure that all children wear sunscreens, broad brim hats, and protective clothing.

XI. Monitor children's sun exposure time.

For more information on the Hawaii Skin Cancer Coalition call the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service Pacific Region at 586-5853. For free patient education publications on the signs and symptoms of skin cancer call the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service toll free at **1-800-4-CANCER**, or the American Cancer Society at **1-800-ACS-2345**.

References

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2. Scotto J, (1996). Cancer Rates and Risks. Skin (Nonmelanoma) (4th ed.,188-189) Bethesda, US Department of Health and Human Services.
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Editor's Note:

Kevin received his Baccalaureate in Psychology and English at the University of Pennsylvania, and obtained his Master of Public Health degree in Epidemiology at the University of Hawaii in Manoa. He began his career with the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service (CIS) in 1993 as a bilingual (Spanish-speaking) Information Specialist and Outreach Coordinator at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia. In 1995, Kevin joined CIS Pacific at the University of Hawaii Cancer Research Center as an Information Specialist and Outreach Coordinator, taking a lead role in developing "Coupons for Cure", a novel pilot project developed to promote neighbor-island clinical trials participation through public contribution of air-travel vouchers. In April 2004, he completed a training fellowship at the National Cancer Institute's Office of Cancer Communications in Bethesda, Maryland. He now serves as Partnership Program Coordinator for the NCI's Cancer Information Service - Pacific Region at the University of Hawaii Cancer Research Center of Hawaii.