

Bringing a New Perspective to the Community for Skin Cancer Awareness

Lillian Cook

Margaret H. Rollins School of Nursing

Nursing 102: Community Event Paper

Mrs. Wingate

March 29, 2024

Bringing a New Perspective to the Community for Skin Cancer Awareness

Skin cancer is widespread globally and the incidence is increasing each year. Types of skin cancer include squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, and melanoma. These types of cancer arise from keratinocytes, which are keratin-producing cells found in the epidermal layer, and melanocytes, which are melanin-producing cells that are found in the epidermis. The epidermis is the outermost layer of the skin which receives the most radiation from ultraviolet rays. Squamous cell carcinoma is normally not life-threatening if treated early, such as excising the lesion, the patients can make a full recovery. Basal cell carcinomas are made up of cells that gradually grow over a long period, this makes the cancer less likely to metastasize, allowing for early treatment and time for patients to notice the lesion on their body. The last type of skin cancer is melanoma, which is the worst and malignant kind of skin cancer. Melanoma has a high chance of metastasis and a poor prognosis due to the rapid replication of cancerous cells. Many people are unaware of skin lesions on their bodies or are not able to see the lesions. It is important to self-check or have a partner check for any abnormalities found on the skin due to the prevalence of cancer and possible metastasis in the body. Did you know that most skin cancers are from ultraviolet light or direct sunlight? To help reduce prevalence in the population people should wear sunscreen with an SPF of 30 and protective clothing to reduce exposure to radiating rays. While many people are unaware of skin lesions that are cancerous and wait to see a healthcare provider, people should do daily skin checks and see their healthcare provider for any abnormalities because DNA mutations in the skin cause cancerous cells that can metastasize to other parts of the body. Prognosis is greatly improved with early treatment and lifestyle modifications significantly decrease the risk of cancer. Prevention and risk reduction of skin cancers will be beneficial for the healthcare community and psychologically for patients

worldwide.

Statement of the Problem

Skin cancers in the United States are increasing in prevalence and it is necessary that change needs to happen, otherwise more people will potentially become chronically ill. “In the U.S., more than 9,500 people are diagnosed with skin cancer every day. More than two people die of the disease every hour” (Skin Cancer Foundation, 2024). This quote proves that this is one of the main types of cancer that needs to be addressed to start risk reduction earlier. “Over 4.3 million basal cell and more than 1 million squamous cell carcinomas are diagnosed annually” (Siegel, V. (2020). More and more patients get diagnosed yearly all because of the lack of knowledge of skin cancer prevention. Every type of skin cancer can be costly to patients, or even deadly. Awareness must be spread to decrease the incidence of lesions and to promote the importance of skin checks annually. This problem significantly affects the nursing community if untreated due to the increasing number of deaths and the impact on families psychologically and physically. All nurses must do a full head-to-toe skin examination upon arrival at the hospital to check for any abnormalities, doing these examinations are crucial in identifying potential lesions. If these cancers are not caught early, the cancer may have metastasized to the lymph nodes or other sections of the body. Watching family members go through the stages of skin cancer can also be excruciatingly painful, so the most beneficial thing that everyone can do is screen for skin cancer annually to prevent the spread of cancer.

Risk Reduction/Treatment of the Problem

Skin cancer screening should be done annually by your primary care provider, but skin checks can also be done by yourself at home. “Suspicious lesions are often assessed and categorized using the ABCDE criteria” (Pierre-Louis, B., 2023). Using this method to identify

lesions of skin cancer includes asymmetry, border, color, diameter, and evolution. This way of finding lesions is helpful due to identifying characteristics that may be present, such as if it has changed color, grown in size, or if it is symmetrical. Any changes in the characteristics of the lesion show possible signs of cancer development and you should immediately tell your primary care provider. Risk factors for skin cancer include ultraviolet radiation or light, family history, being over the age of 60 years old, smoking, history of sunburn on the skin, and exposure to chemicals. Many of the risk factors for skin cancer are modifiable and can be adjusted with lifestyle changes. Some positive lifestyle choices that would help prevent skin cancer occurrence would be to avoid the use of tanning beds, wear protective clothing when outdoors, use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, and avoid or limit exposure to chemicals. Some examples of protective clothing would include hats, long sleeve pants, and long sleeve shirts. Treatments for skin cancer include surgical excision, such as shave biopsies, punch biopsies, incisional biopsies, or excisional biopsies. Shave biopsies are when a razor blade is used to excise the lesion on the skin. Punch biopsies are when a medical provider uses a surgical instrument is used to remove a circular portion of the lesion that penetrates the epidermis, removing a full thickness lesion. The last two kinds of biopsies, incisional and excisional, are removed by a surgeon using a scalpel in a sterile field. Chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and immunotherapy may be used as a treatment to reduce the risk of metastasis or reduce the size of the lesion. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy both destroy cancer cells to help remove the cancer from the body, but there are many side effects that go along with these treatments. Side effects include hair loss, destruction of normal cells in the body, and decrease the ability to fight infection, making the patient immunocompromised. If the cancer is suspected to have metastasized to other parts of the body a lymph node biopsy may have also been done. All these treatments are beneficial to the outcome

of skin cancer prognosis, but with lifestyle modifications this can all be prevented.

Planning of Teaching Content

Education is a key detail in promoting awareness of skin cancer, such as providing reliable ways to prevent the prevalence of this disease. Community members should wear an SPF of 30 or higher, reapplying every two hours, and wear protective clothing daily to greatly decrease exposure to ultraviolet rays. By following these preventative measures there will be a decrease in the incidence of skin cancers. Also, people need to avoid tanning beds to help reduce the exposure to ultraviolet radiation on their skin, even going once highly increases the risk for skin lesions. Community members must understand the importance of doing self-examinations of their skin at least once yearly, by doing this people will be able to notice changes or abnormalities on their skin. Another way to do skin examinations would be to do them with a family member or spouse who can help look in places that you may not be able to see easily, such as your back, allowing for the second person to notice any lesions that may be present. Ways to help the community start the prevention of skin cancer would be handing out pamphlets with education on harmful ultraviolet rays and providing sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. By informing the public of the harmful effects of skin cancer the community may be more convinced to start using protective measures. Another way to provide resources to the community would be to hand out business cards for dermatology offices in the area so that there is easy access to providers, allowing for skin checks to be more prevalent. Trifolds are also another easy way to spark the community's attention by using different colors, graphs, and pictures on the board. It is important to use items that keep the community engaged and to have a reading level that everyone can understand. Educating the community will be beneficial for both the community and healthcare workers due to the increase of knowledge of the different types of

cancer.

Conclusion

Spreading awareness for skin cancer will help reduce the risk factors and prevalence worldwide. Community health fairs allows students to educate the community about prevention and help people fully understand how to properly screen for skin cancer. Lifestyle modifications are the easiest way to prevent skin cancer, such as avoiding tanning beds or laying out in the sun without sunscreen. By using trifold, handouts, and models, people will be able to see how to look for lesions during examinations and what they should use to protect themselves, such as sunscreen and protective clothing. Passing out pamphlets to people will also be beneficial so that people in the community will be able to refer to the education provided and can share the information with others around them. There has been an increase in the number of diagnoses in skin cancer in the past couple of years and education is a critical part in reducing the spread cancer worldwide.

References

- Taylor, M., & Schub, T. (2022) Basal cell carcinoma. *Dynamic Health*. Retrieved March 21, 2024, from <https://www.dynahealth.com>
- Siegel, V. (2020) Best practice implementation of skin cancer guidelines on the EMR to educate patients. *MEDSURG Nursing*, (29)6, 407-410.
- Spitzer, K., Schub, T. (2022) Cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma. *Dynamic Health*. Retrieved March 21, 2024, from <https://www.dynahealth.com>
- Pierre-Louis, B. (2023) Melanoma. *Dynamic Health*. Retrieved March 21, 2024, from <https://www.dynahealth.com>
- Van Onselen, J. (2022) Lesion awareness and recognising signs of skin cancer. *Dermatological Nursing*, (21)1, 47-48.
- Skin Cancer Foundation (2024, February). *Skin cancer facts & statistics*.
<https://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/skin-cancer-facts/#nonmelanoma>
- Sander, M., Sander, M., Burbidge, T., & Beecker, J. (2020) The efficacy and safety of sunscreen use of prevention of skin cancer. *CMAJ*, (192)50, E1802-E1808.
<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/192/50/E1802.full.pdf>