

Statement



The Australasian College of Dermatologists

CALLS FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO AUSTRALIA'S SKIN CANCER EPIDEMIC

The Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) is calling for an integrated approach to combat Australia's spiralling skin cancer situation.

According to Dr Anne Howard, President of the ACD, the disease is now reaching epidemic proportions amongst the Australian population and the solution to this problem will require a multi-faceted line of attack.

There are 340 Dermatologists in Australia and approximately 19,000 General Practitioners. Integration of services between Dermatologists and General Practitioners, along with the assistance of Government bodies, is essential to combat this worsening health problem.

The ACD believes that further education for General Practitioners in the diagnosis and management of skin conditions and skin cancers, and continuing public education campaigns over a prolonged period promoting sun protective measures, and self-screening for unusual skin lesions, is required to produce a sustained result.

The Government also has a role with regards to the funding of education programmes and population surveys to fine tune the campaigns and identify particular target groups most in need, says Dr Howard.

"Innovation with regards to new treatments, new methods of treatment delivery, and earlier diagnosis is also required."

The ACD believes it is important to target specific groups such as those in the teenage years, young adults and sportspeople, as well as focusing on men over the age of forty.

Outcome measures will need to be closely monitored with regards to the delay of 5, 10 or 15 years between the institution of a primary prevention campaign and the expected outcome – that is a reduction in the number of skin cancers.

Stakeholder participation in research, public education strategies, and guidelines are also important, where the various stakeholders can have a role to play in the development of new strategies for all types of cancer including skin cancer. The ACD believes that implementing this kind of approach will ensure significant benefits for the Australian population over the next few years and decades, and therefore a lasting legacy.

Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer, and is responsible for the death of more than 1,000 Australians per year, (approximately ten times the incidence in the United Kingdom).

Non-melanoma skin cancer is the most expensive of all cancers in Australia, costing the health budget many hundreds of millions of dollars per year.