



# THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF DERMATOLOGISTS

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## **International dermatologist in Perth to highlight health risks associated with tattoos**

There's no doubt that body art is becoming increasingly popular. But while most people understand that tattoos carry a risk of irritation and infection, most probably aren't aware that in some people they can actually cause cancer or disfigurement.

Dermatologist Dr Hazel Oon, from Singapore's National Skin Centre, will be in Perth this weekend to highlight the problems associated with tattoos at the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting of the Australasian College of Dermatologists.

Dr Oon's presentation will review the literature on tattoo-induced pseudolymphoma, and specifically focus on the case of a female patient who had a major reaction to a professional tattoo on her ankle.

"Because testing is quite difficult, reactions such as this are often mistaken for the more commonly occurring tattoo-associated contact dermatitis, granuloma or skin infection," Dr Oon says.

"However, in this case the nodules were restricted to the red regions of the tattoo, and spared the blue black areas of tattooed skin.

"The eventual diagnosis was a pseudolymphoma, which is benign. However, pseudolymphoma does have the potential to transform into frank lymphoma, which is malignant."

Dr Oon says pseudolymphomas appear to commonly occur at the site of a red tattoo. They are difficult to diagnose and there is no way of predicting who will have this reaction, because it is not restricted to people with sensitive skin.

The challenge facing dermatologists is how to treat the condition, depending on where it occurs on the body.

"Because our patient had quite a large tattoo on the ankle it was a difficult area to treat," says Dr Oon.

"To excise the tattoo would require a skin graft and leave a large scar. Instead, we decided to use a combination of two lasers. Firstly, we used a fractional carbon dioxide laser to create channels in the skin to allow for easier removal of the tattoo pigment. Then we used a pigment laser, which is commonly used to treat red tattoos and steroid injections to relieve the itch."

Almost 400 skin specialists are expected to attend the scientific meeting in Perth, which runs from May 15 to 18, to share the latest research and developments in their field.

Other presentations and sessions will focus on research and developments in:

- What's new in laser surgery on the skin;
- Moles and melanoma;
- New treatments for psoriasis;

- Novel causes of contact dermatitis; and
- Advances in acne management.

A full copy of the program is available at [www.dermcoll.asn.au](http://www.dermcoll.asn.au).

**NOTE TO EDITORS:** Media representatives are welcome to attend sessions and registration can be arranged for accredited media. Dr Hazel Oon is available for media interviews prior to and during the event.

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