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Welcome to the first newsletter for the QSkin study. As you may recall, QSkin is a research project being undertaken by doctors and scientists at the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. You are receiving this update because you kindly answered a survey for the QSkin study during 2011. When recruitment closes early this year, QSkin will be the world's largest study of skin cancer and melanoma.

By answering the QSkin Survey, you have helped to build a research resource that will yield findings for years to come. In this first newsletter, we would like to give you an update of progress to date, as well as introduce our research team and share with you our future research plans. Should you have any questions about any aspect of this study, please do not hesitate to contact us. We thank you again for your help and look forward to sharing with you the findings from this remarkable study.

**David Whiteman and Catherine Olsen**  
**Principal Investigators of QSkin**

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**Queensland Institute of  
Medical Research**

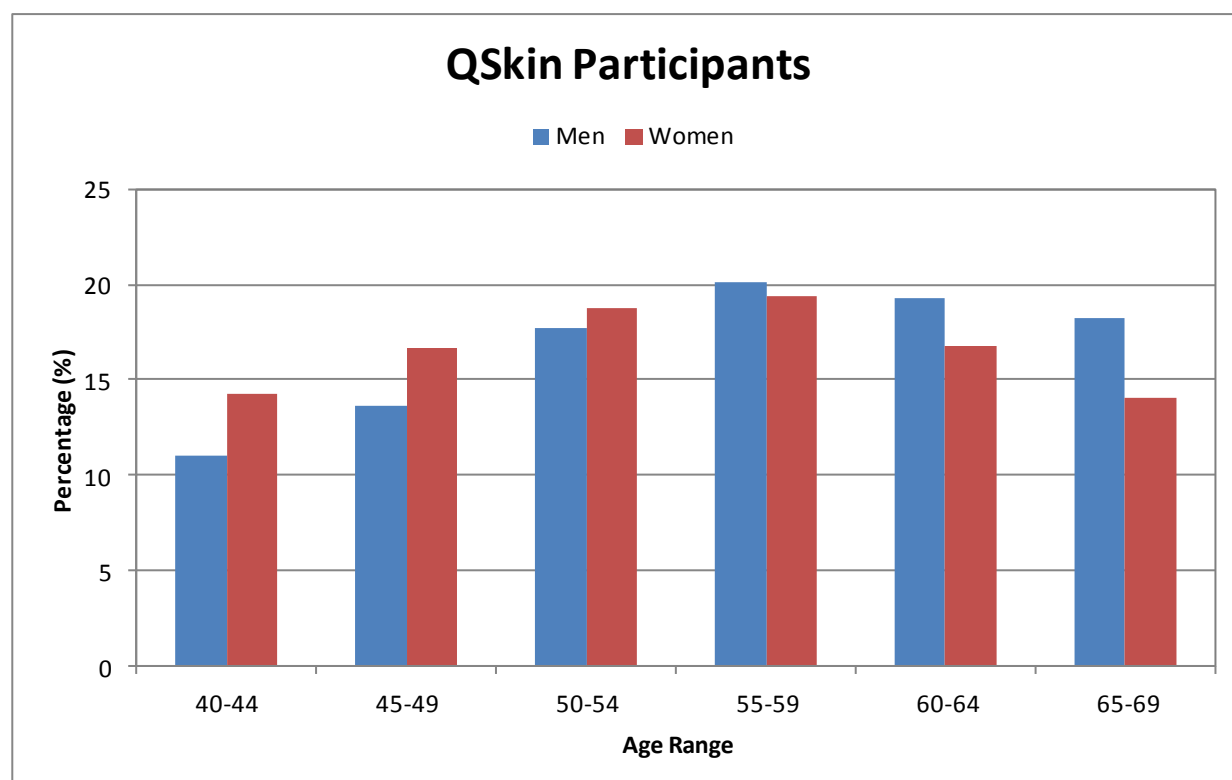
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## Recruitment update

The QSkin study team posted the first 20,000 invitations to study participants in January 2011, just before the skies darkened over Queensland and dumped torrential rains across the already-soaked land. Given the enormity of the floods in Queensland, we expected very few people would have the time or energy to take part in a medical research project at such a tragic time. So we were stunned by the

overwhelmingly positive response that followed. More than 4000 Queenslanders completed our survey during that flood-ravaged month, and that trend continued unchanged throughout 2011. We are now in the final stages of recruitment and more than 44,000 people have submitted their surveys. Interestingly, only 12.6% of you chose to complete your surveys online at the QSkin website. Either way is fine with us – we are grateful that you have taken part!



## Early findings

Participants are to be congratulated for their care in completing the QSkin Survey forms. Because the survey data are so 'clean' (that is, very few questions were left blank, or answered incorrectly by ticking more than one box), we have been able to undertake analyses almost as soon as the surveys are scanned. Some early findings are :

- **39.4%** of QSkin participants have already been treated for skin cancer
- **6%** have had more than 20 bad sunburns as a child,
- **2.3%** have used sunbeds more than 10 times
- **23%** report a family history of melanoma

We will conduct in-depth analyses during the year, and report on our findings in future newsletters.

## Skin cancer facts

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Australia, estimated to affect more than 300,000 Australians every year
- The commonest types of skin cancer are **basal cell carcinomas** (or BCC), **squamous cell carcinomas** (or SCC) and **melanomas**. Melanomas are the most dangerous of these cancers, but both BCC and SCC can invade deeply into the skin.
- Queensland has the highest incidence of **melanoma** in the world. Each year, more than 2,500 Queenslanders are diagnosed with melanoma.
- **Melanoma** is by far the most common cancer in Queenslanders under the age of 40 years. More than a quarter of all cancers in people under 40 are **melanoma**.
- Most skin cancers can be completely cured if diagnosed early.

## Our team

**Professor David Whiteman** and **Dr Catherine Olsen** are the Principal Investigators of QSkin. Between them, David and Catherine have more than 25 years experience in studying the causes of melanoma and skin cancer. During the next 12 months, they will be carefully analysing the first wave of data, and preparing grant applications to keep the QSkin Study funded into the years ahead.

**Dr Conrad Morze** is a GP with a special interest in diagnosing and treating skin cancers. Conrad has joined the team to perform skin examinations on QSkin participants. More details soon!

**Susan Perry, Rebekah Cicero** and **Annaka Springford** are the 'front line' team who maintain contact with participants, answer questions, send out reminders, and generally keep the show on the road.

If you ever ring the QSkin helpline, more than likely you will speak with one of these three!

**Lea Jackman** and **Barbara Ranieri** are the 'engine room' of QSkin. Lea is our database expert, and keeps a tight check to ensure that all study data are stored securely. We constantly need to update addresses, change the status of study participants or download data – Lea makes all of this happen. In the background, Barb ensures that letters get sent to the right people at the right time, and helps to coordinate all of the administrative tasks associated with keeping a big study going.

In addition, we have many wonderful associate investigators, professional colleagues and graduate students who provide helpful advice or guidance whenever "interesting" issues crop up...



L to R: David Whiteman, Sue Perry, Barb Ranieri, Rebekah Cicero, Lea Jackman, Catherine Olsen

## The next 12 months

Our task for 2012 is to finish recruiting people into the study. Once this has been accomplished, we will commence the analysis of the 'baseline' data; that is, we will describe all of the important features of this cohort. For example, we need to know the distribution of hair colour, skin type and eye colour in the cohort. We also need to know how many people have lived all of their life in Queensland, and how many have lived elsewhere. Behaviours such as use of sun screen and hats, use of tanning beds, and frequency of having skin checks are all important as well, and need to be documented. These initial descriptions of the cohort will be published in scientific journals.

## Thanks

Projects of the size of QSkin are only made possible through the assistance, goodwill and skills of a great many people. Firstly, we thank you, the participants, for donating your time and sharing your personal information to make this study possible. Secondly, we thank the funding bodies (the **National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia** and the **Xstrata Community Fund**) who have supported this expensive undertaking since its inception. Thirdly, we thank the members of the **QSkin Scientific Advisory Board** (Professor Dallas English,

University of Melbourne; Professor Alison Venn, University of Tasmania; Ms Lisa McFadyen, CEO, Melanoma Patients Australia), who have provided outstanding independent advice during critical stages of the study.

**Melanoma Patients Australia** deserves special mention for ongoing support and input to this study. Finally, we thank the great **QSkin Team** for their tireless efforts in making the study happen – when the phones are ringing, emails are flooding in, and surveys keep piling up, it takes a special group to keep smiling and see the big picture. We look forward to keeping you informed through further updates as the study progresses.

### Feedback?

If you have any comments or updated information (e.g. change of address), please contact us:

Tel: 1800 222 600

Email: [gskin@qimr.edu.au](mailto:gskin@qimr.edu.au)

Web: [www.Qskin.qimr.edu.au](http://www.Qskin.qimr.edu.au)

## QSkin goes paperless

To keep costs low (and thus save our precious research funds), future QSkin newsletters will only be available electronically on the QSkin website. Please visit [www.qskin.qimr.edu.au](http://www.qskin.qimr.edu.au) to keep in touch with all developments in the QSkin study.



Queensland Institute of  
**Medical Research**

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