



As the hot Queensland summer rapidly approaches we welcome you to the fourth issue of **QSkin News**. It is time to update you about our activities during the past few months.

**Professor David Whiteman
and Dr Catherine Olsen**
QSkin Investigators

Study progress update

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, we have linked the QSkin study database with the Queensland Cancer Registry. We have now also linked the database with records from Medicare Australia, and we are now in the process of analysing these complex records. Medicare captures information on the treatment of non-melanoma skin cancers (basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma) for all QSkin participants who have consented to linking their data. We are also delighted to report two new study publications (see overleaf).



QSkin study expands horizons

Several lines of scientific research have suggested that what we eat may influence the development of skin cancer. In addition to limiting our sun exposure, eating certain foods may help reduce our risk. So that we can examine the role of nutrition in the development of skin cancer, we plan to ask each of you to complete a questionnaire through our study website early next year. This questionnaire will ask how often you usually eat different types of foods and should take no more than 40 minutes to complete online. More information will follow on this exciting new development.



Study progress update
Expanding horizons
New scientific papers
QSkin in the news
Follow-up



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New QSkin scientific papers

Morze CJ, Olsen CM, Perry SL, Jackman LM, Raineri BA, O'Brien SM, Cicero RA, Whiteman DC for the QSkin Study. A baseline survey instrument to capture self-reported melanoma risk factors in a large prospective cohort study of Australian men and women demonstrated good test-retest reproducibility. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*. (Accepted 27/06/2012)

Olsen CM, Green, AC. More evidence of harms of sunbed use, particularly for young people. *BMJ* 2012;345:e6101.

QSkin in the news

The Sunday Mail,
Sunday 9 September

State of burnout

Skin cancer hits four in 10

Samantha Healy

FOUR in every 10 Queenslanders have had at least one skin cancer removed.

The world's biggest study of skin cancer surveyed more than 43,000 Queenslanders aged 40-69 – and the results are "sobering".

Professor David Whiteman, from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, said more than 18,000 respondents had reported having at least one skin cancer surgically removed, burnt or frozen.

"As a researcher you know it is a very, very common cancer, but when you look at the results of the initial surveys from real people, well, you just know a lot more will have developed skin cancer by the time this project is complete," Prof Whiteman said.

Nearly a quarter of those had also reported a family history of melanoma, he said.

"It is not just a funny mole gone

bad, and it can be lethal. That is why it is so important to understand not just their history of sun exposure but also the genetic factors, the environmental factors and so on."

Preliminary results from the QSkin Sun and Health Study were published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* last week.

The research group chose the 40-69-year age group because the median age for a melanoma diagnosis in Brisbane is 59 years. The average age is even lower in central Queensland at 57 years old.

In total, 43,794 men and women aged 40-69 were selected randomly from the Australian Electoral Roll and will be followed for a decade or so.

Yesterday's National Shade Day started a month-long awareness campaign for the Melanoma Institute Australia.

50 Shades of Queensland
POSTER P44

The Courier-Mail, Saturday 10 November

Death star: Sun brings men pain from above

JANELLE MILES
MEDICAL REPORTER

QUEENSLAND men are much more likely to be diagnosed with melanoma and die from this deadliest form of skin cancer than women, latest figures show.

Of the 3007 Queenslanders diagnosed with melanoma of the skin in 2009, 1757 of them were men – almost 60 per cent.

Cancer Council Queensland public health executive manager Louise Baldwin said melanoma incidence was slightly higher among women until the age of 45, when rates started to skyrocket in men.

Males also accounted for more than two-thirds of the 250 Queensland deaths from melanomas of the skin in 2009, when it claimed 80 women and 170 men.

Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) epidemiologist David Whiteman said Australian men typically presented with more ad-

vanced melanomas, which carried a worse prognosis.

"We believe that the higher mortality in men is largely due to their poorer health behaviours – such as they're less likely to visit a doctor," he said.

Professor Whiteman said gender differences in melanoma incidence could be explained by increased sun exposure among men, particularly on the back, shoulders, head and neck.

Brisbane cancer specialist Paul Mainwaring blamed the trend on men working with their shirts off and not wearing sunscreen.

"I see guys with melanoma who worked on the railways and the construction industry in the '50s and '60s," he said.

"I also see melanomas in young guys with freckles who work out in the coal basin."

Prof Whiteman and

QIMR colleague Catherine Olsen have launched the largest medical research study in Queensland, a survey of 44,000 people, to learn more about skin cancer, including melanomas.

Participants will also provide a DNA sample.

Queenslanders aged 40 to 69 have been recruited for the study from the electoral roll and will be followed for a decade. Since 1997, annual melanoma incidence rates in Queensland have remained unchanged at about 67 new diagnoses per 100,000 people.

Rates have decreased in people aged under 45, but have spiked in older Queenslanders.

Prof Whiteman suggested the drop in younger age groups was indicative of the effectiveness of the Slip, Slop, Slap campaign 30 years ago.

"It does appear that there is a particular

period early in your life when sun exposure is most harmful," he said.

"The Slip, Slop, Slap campaign started in the '80s and was targeted at young people.

"Those people are now in their 30s and 40s, so we're starting to see those people are actually having lower rates of melanoma than their parents did at the same age.

"In the field of cancer, that's how long prevention takes."

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Paul Mainwaring

Follow-up

We are continuing to contact a group of QSkin Participants who did not provide their date of birth on their study consent form (last page of survey booklet), either by email, mail or phone. Many of you have responded already—Thank you!

Feedback?

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

Tel: 1800 222 600 Email: qskin@qimr.edu.au Web: www.qskin.qimr.edu.au

We wish to send future newsletters by email or by text message. If you have received this newsletter by post, please [email us](mailto:qskin@qimr.edu.au) with your contact details or call the study helpline.



Queensland Institute of
Medical Research

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