

Michigan Residents Have High Rate of Skin Cancer Deaths

Michigan has one of the highest rates of sunburn with an incidence of 46-50 percent in white adults. This may reflect a population that is more sun-sensitive or less likely to practice sun-safe behaviors.³

Incidence of Skin Cancer and Melanoma

More than one million new cases of nonmelanoma skin cancer are diagnosed each year in the United States. Some 60,000 of skin cancers are melanoma, which causes the majority of the approximately 10,000 skin cancer deaths each year.¹

Some 1,776 new melanomas were diagnosed in Michigan in 2002. During 2003, more than 200 patients died from the disease. However, during 2002, more than 78 percent of newly diagnosed cases of melanoma in Michigan were detected at the

localized stage. The five-year-survival rate for those whose melanoma is detected at the localized stage is about 98 percent.⁴

Treatment of Skin Cancer

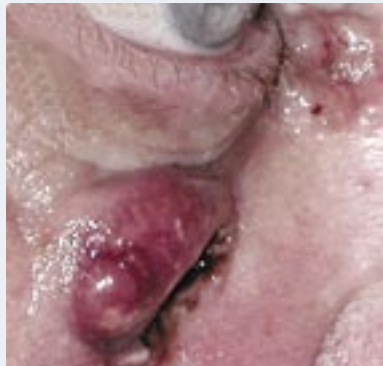
Skin cancer is the most common malignancy, but it is also highly preventable and treatable. Physicians and patients alike recognize the role of surgery in skin cancers. Many overlook the role of radiation therapy.

“The treatment of choice for squamous or basal cell cancer is either surgery or radiation therapy, which are equally effective, ” comments **Peter Lai, PhD, MD**, a radiation oncologist at Lakeland. “Surgery has the advantage of needing only one or two visits. Radiation may require daily treatment for 10 to 30

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days. Radiation therapy may be preferable for skin cancer on the head, neck or facial triangle, where it may preserve form and function. When recommending treatment, physicians need to consider a number of factors in deciding which is best for each patient.



Before radiation:

This patient was diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma involving two areas: right intraorbital and right medial canthus. Radiation is the ideal treatment of choice because it preserves both form and function of the eye. Surgery would have a comparable cure rate but would have required orbital exenteration, resulting in loss of the patient's eye.



After radiation: *The basal cell carcinoma regressed completely after a course of radiation treatment, obviating the need for surgery.*

Preserving both form and function should be a major factor in the decision.”

“Surgery and radiation therapy complement each other,” notes Dr. Lai. “Post-surgical recurrences may be treated with radiation and post-radiation recurrences may be treated with surgery.”

Prevention

When treating Michigan patients, it is important for physicians to remind them about meticulous protection from damaging sun exposure. The risk for sun-induced malignancy remains high even in northern states.

For more information or to schedule a consultation with Dr. Lai, call 269-983-8888.

¹*Skin Cancer Facts.* American Cancer Society. www.cancer.org

²*Many Young American Risk Skin Cancer from Annual Sun Burns.* Center for Advancement of Health. www.hbns.org/newsrelease/sunburn.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Facts about Skin Cancer.* Michigan Department of Community Health. www.michigan.gov.

⁵*The American Cancer Society Works to Increase Skin Protection Awareness.* American Cancer Society. www.cancer.org.