

Patient Perceptions of Skin Lesion Assessment and Education in a Primary Care Setting

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INTRODUCTION: As a primary healthcare provider, providing education to patients plays an important role in preventative healthcare. The discussion of skin health should be included with other routine education and preventative screenings, such as mammograms, and held to the same level of significance. With appropriate education, such as how to identify skin lesion changes, patients may be able to identify skin changes and communicate these concerns with their provider. Unfortunately, not having this education as a patient may result in a possible late or missed diagnosis of skin cancer, specifically melanoma, which can have a devastating prognosis.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this project was to evaluate if patients felt comfortable with their skin health and if they perceived that their primary care providers assessed their skin and provided education on skin health topics. This included discussing skin protection measures such as the use of sunscreen and a hat, performing a thorough skin examination, and providing education on the importance of recognizing skin lesion changes.

METHODS: Any patient who had an appointment for an annual exam, well- child check, or sport physical was eligible to participate in this study. At the completion of the appointment, a survey was provided that gathered information about perceived skin education and assessment received from their healthcare provider. The survey was completed prior to leaving the exam room. The data from the surveys were reviewed and analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences, descriptive statistics.

RESULTS: The majority of the participants felt comfortable identifying skin changes, assessing their skin, and their current understanding of skin health. However, more than half of the participants did not perceive that their provider assessed their skin or provided education on skin health.

CONCLUSION: Skin health was missed by primary care providers for the majority of patients in this study. Assessing patients' skin and providing them with the tools and knowledge to identify changing skin lesions and preventative skin protective measures, can ultimately increase skin health and decrease the likelihood of skin cancer, specifically melanoma.