ABSTRACT

Introduction: It is estimated that 30 million Americans tan in a given year and about two million of them will be teens. Exposure to UV rays seems to be the most important environmental factor in developing skin cancer. Nearly 20 states have passed some type of legislation on youth access to indoor tanning. Kansas has no regulations on youth access to indoor tanning. Few surveys have been done regarding whether tanning operators support or oppose youth access restrictions. Methodology: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the basic demographics, attitudes and stated practices regarding youth access to tanning among Kansas tanning operators. A survey was mailed to Kansas tanning facilities regarding their name and results were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results: The survey response rate was 28%. The majority of the respondents felt that there was "none to a little risk" with indoor tanning (60%). However, most felt that someone could be too young to tan and 65% had discouraged one from tanning because of their age. 92% supported written parental consent, yet were not enforcing parents to accompany youth on their first visit. Conclusion: The majority of operators believed that written parental consent and age regulations for indoor tanning should be required, yet they were not enforcing parents to accompany youth on their first visit. This study documents perceptions of Kansas tanning operators regarding youth access to tanning and may be helpful to those contemplating policy in this regard in the State of Kansas.

INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that thirty million Americans will use indoor tanning this year and about two million of them will be teens [1]. Exposure to ultraviolet rays seems to be the most important environmental factor in developing skin cancer. It has also been shown that teens may be especially susceptible to skin cancer because cells of younger individuals divide and change more rapidly than those of adults [1]. Eighteen states have passed legislation on youth access to tanning. Kansas has no regulations on youth access to tanning [2-3]. Few studies have been done regarding whether tanning operators support or oppose youth access restrictions.

METHODS

This study was designed to take a cross-sectional view of Kansas tanning facilities. Specifically, to evaluate tanning operators' attitudes and stated practices regarding youth access to indoor tanning. A survey consisting of seventeen questions with multiple choice, dichotomous and Likert scale type questions was sent to a convenience sample of tanning facilities licensed in the State of Kansas. Subsequently, 651 tanning facilities were mailed a survey. The survey was based on a previous study conducted by Hester et al. and the rights to the survey were obtained from the survey authors prior to initiating the study [4].

RESULTS

The survey response rate was 28% (n=651). The majority of the respondents felt that there was “none to a little risk” with indoor tanning (60%). Most did feel that someone can be too young to tan and 65% had discouraged one from tanning because of their age. 92% supported written parental consent, yet were not enforcing parents to accompany youth on their first visit.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The majority of operators believed that written parental consent and age regulations for indoor tanning should be required, yet they were not enforcing parents to accompany youth on their first visit. This study documents perceptions of Kansas tanning operators regarding youth access to tanning and may be helpful to those contemplating policy in this regard in the State of Kansas.