Epiphanies in Dermatology that Changed the Course of Careers and the Face of Dermatology

Lunch Program – Sponsored by Leo Pharma

Does skin cancer screening lead to better health outcomes?

An estimated 80-90 percent of all skin cancers are associated with exposure to UV radiation (UVR)\(^1\), mainly from the sun\(^2\). Solar UVR has been placed in the most dangerous group of carcinogenic agents for humans since 1992. Working Group convened by the IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer) performed thorough review of all available data from laboratory, animal, and human studies and determined that sufficient evidence existed to place solar UVR, in the IARC’s Group I\(^3\).

Based on the rise in skin cancers in Germany, Prof. Eckhard Breitbart conducted the SCREEN study, a pilot study, in Schleswig-Holstein, in Germany, in 2003/2004. Out of 1.88 million eligible citizens in Schleswig-Holstein, 360,288 participated in SCREEN. The overall population-based participation rate was 19%. A total of 3103 malignant skin tumors were found. The SCREEN project showed that large-scale systematic skin cancer screening is feasible and has the potential to reduce the skin cancer burden\(^4\). Based on the results from SCREEN, a national, statutory skin cancer early detection program was implemented in Germany in 2008. Since then, all Germans, above the age of 35 years, have skin checks every second year.

In the United States, the last time the government-backed U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) looked at skin cancer screenings was in 2009. The group said there was not enough evidence to recommend full-body exams to check for signs of skin cancer in adults\(^5\). The USPSTF, however, did not recommend against it either.

Prof. Breitbart will moderate the discussion about relevance of skin cancer screening during the luncheon on June 8, 2015. He will present his lifelong dedication to skin cancer screening, scientific and health economic results from Germany and the on-going study in Alberta, Canada. Distinguished guests from USA will be invited to give their perspective on the value of early detection of skin cancer and their reflections in regards to high risk groups, to offer their response to the overall question: 

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1. IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention, Volume 5: Sunscreens, chapter 1 “Sun, skin and cancer prevention”