April 13, 2016

Via online submission at http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Comment/Collect/QuestionPage

United States Preventative Services Task Force
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Draft Research Plan: Skin Cancer Prevention: Behavioral Counseling

Dear Task Force Members,

On behalf of the more than 13,500 U.S. based members of the American Academy of Dermatology Association (Academy), I am writing to provide comments regarding the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Draft Research Plan for Skin Cancer Prevention: Behavioral Counseling published on November 17, 2015. The Academy appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the draft proposed analytic framework, draft proposed key questions to be systematically reviewed, the draft proposed contextual question and the draft proposed research approach for skin cancer prevention behavioral counseling that the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF or Task Force) posed online at http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Document/draft-research-plan/skin-cancer-counseling.

The Academy is committed to educating the public on skin cancer prevention. We commend the USPSTF for recognizing the importance of behavioral counseling on skin cancer prevention for all populations and for all age groups, including parents/caregivers of children. The incidence of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers is rising at an alarming rate.1, 2, 3, 4 Skin cancer is the most commonly occurring cancer and current estimates are that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in his or her lifetime.5

Especially concerning is the increasing incidence of skin cancer in younger populations.6 Melanoma is the second most common form of cancer for females ages 15 to 29, and is increasing faster in this group compared to their male counterparts.7, 8

It is estimated that melanoma will account for over 10,000 deaths this year, and metastatic squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) could also result in 4,000-9,000 deaths. In addition, the morbidity associated with skin cancer can be significant.

Importantly, the U.S. Surgeon General has identified skin cancer a major public health problem, and encourages the provision of information the public needs to make informed, healthy choices about ultraviolet radiation (UV) exposure, among other strategic goals to address these largely preventable cancers. While the effects of skin cancer can be devastating, this disease is highly treatable when detected early. Early detection is vital in the fight against skin cancer. The Academy encourages everyone to serve as their own health advocates by regularly conducting skin self-exams and visiting a board-certified dermatologist if they notice any suspicious spots on their skin.

As everyone regardless of age or race is at risk for skin cancer, we commend the USPSTF for drafting a research plan that is demographically broad. We further commend the USPSTF for including in its research plan any setting linked with primary health care delivery and we suggest it would be helpful that this include counseling by pediatricians and other types of clinicians who counsel children and parents. We respectfully suggest that the USPSTF may want to consider segmenting the findings of the systematic review based on the age of the patient/status as caregiver. Finally, we recommend that the USPSTF include solar lentigines/freckles as an additional “intermediate outcome” in the draft proposed analytic framework. Lentigines are a common visible sign of extensive sun exposure and early sun damage in adolescent and young adult populations.

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The Academy commends the USPSTF for its continued commitment to ensuring and encouraging wellness for the American people. We would like to be a resource to the Task Force as it finalizes its draft research plan regarding this important topic. Please contact Leslie Stein Lloyd, JD, Director of Regulatory and Payment Policy, at lsteinlloyd@aad.org or 202-847-3555 should you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Abel Torres, MD, JD
President

CC: Elaine Weiss, CEO & Executive Director
Barbara Greenan, Senior Director, Advocacy and Policy
Leslie Stein Lloyd, JD, Director, Regulatory and Public Policy