Internet based health promotion campaign against skin cancer - Results of www.skincheck.ch in Switzerland

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Conventional skin cancer prevention programs appeal to limited populations, and the middle aged male population responds less frequently. Our objective was to establish a complementary health promotion campaign tool for skin cancer prevention. Internet-based education, instruction for self assessment and teledermatological evaluation of skin lesions by an expert commission of dermatologists was used. Compliance and clinical diagnosis was assessed in a subgroup. 12,000 users visited the educational website. There was strong interest among the middle aged male population (53% (N = 262): male; mean age: 42). 28.5% of examined lesions (N = 494) were considered suspicious. Email requests, sent to the group whose lesions where considered suspicious, were answered by 46.0% of females (N = 29) and 59.7% of males (N = 46) with a female distribution predominantly in younger ages (52.6% of females with known age: < 30 years). Males were predominantly represented over 30 years (86.2% of all males). According to user’s declarations, at least 8 (8.5%) malignant lesions (1 melanoma in situ, 1 squamous cell carcinoma, 4 basal cell carcinomas, 2 malignant lesions without declared diagnosis) were finally diagnosed by physicians. We conclude that internet-based, interactive, educational programs, in addition to existing health promotion campaigns, can enhance public participation in the middle aged male population in skin cancer prevention.

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