Seniors have highest increases in malignant melanoma

Melanoma incidence has been rising in Ontarians age 45 and older, especially in seniors. While the number of new cases for this disease remained stable in younger adults ages 25–44, melanoma incidence rates in Ontarians aged 65 and older increased annually by 3.6% between 1992 and 2009 and rose by 1.3% in Ontarians ages 45–64.

These Ontario trends match recently published findings from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Norway, and for white people in the U.S. that show that melanoma incidence rates have increased steadily in generations born up to the end of the 1940s, and have been stable or decreased for people born since then.¹

The authors of the international paper concluded that growing awareness of skin cancer and its risk factors has contributed to lower risk in recent generations. Between 1996 and 2006, however, Ontarians engaged in more high-risk sun-related behaviours than ever. Younger people, in particular, were more likely to spend unprotected time outdoors and try to get a tan from the sun or tanning equipment, despite their greater awareness of skin cancer risk factors.²

- Melanoma incidence has been increasing in Ontarians age 45 and older, especially in seniors.
- Public health campaigns on sun awareness should be continued.

Malignant melanoma is the most fatal form of skin cancer. Over 450 Ontarians died from it in 2009 and it was the 6th most commonly diagnosed cancer in Ontario that year, with approximately 2,500 new cases. To further lower the number of new cases of melanoma and deaths related to this disease, targeted public sun awareness campaigns need to continue.
References