



EPIDEMIOLOGY

## SKIN CANCER KNOWLEDGE AND UV EXPOSURE BEHAVIOURS: EVIDENCES FROM A SAMPLE OF 701 ITALIAN ADOLESCENTS.

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**Background:** Skin cancers are among the most widespread malignancies in fair skinned population. Primary prevention of UV exposure, which is the main environmental risk factor, can be effective particularly during childhood and adolescence. However, prevention campaigns risk being costly and ineffective if not appropriately targeted.

**Objective:** To investigate the status of skin cancer knowledge amongst Italian adolescents and its relationship with natural and artificial UV exposure behaviours.

**Materials and Methods:** We administered a questionnaire about skin cancers knowledge, perceived UV severity, sun-related behaviours and indoor tanning to a sample of 701 Italian adolescents.

First, we offer a descriptive analysis to provide a broad picture of adolescents' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Second, we analyze associations among major variables through contingency tables to identify possible predictors of behaviour in the sun, indoor tanning and sunscreen misuse. Then, we employ multivariate logistic regressions to test the significance and impact of predictive variables.

**Results:** The adolescents in our sample appear relatively well informed about both skin cancers and their causes, even though there is room for improvement. We find that 6% of subjects have used sunlamps at least once and among them, 28% is underage. There is no correlation between knowledge and sun protection behaviours. However, multivariate analysis shows that dermatologists (OR=1.60) and information campaigns held in schools (OR=1.44) are predictors of better behaviours in the sun.

Providing information through the internet and social media is a positive determinant of higher perceived severity of artificial UVs that, in turns, significantly lowers sunlamps usage (OR=0.14).

Lastly, we report significant evidence in favour of the existence of the sunscreen paradox.

**Conclusions:** Better knowledge per se does not necessarily produce better behaviours. Rather, the modalities that adolescents are informed through seem to be the key factor that information campaigns should take into consideration.

