



GLOBAL SKIN HEALTH

# SKIN CANCER PREVENTION AND SUN PROTECTION BEHAVIOR AMONG TRIATHLETES FROM THE PHILIPPINES AND THE MIDDLE EAST: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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**Background:** Ultraviolet radiation is a major modifiable risk factor for aging and skin cancer. Studies assessing knowledge and behavior towards sun exposure and protection should be conducted among high-risk groups like the triathletes.

**Objectives:** To assess and compare the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding sun exposure and protection among triathletes near the equator.

**Methods:** This was a cross-sectional study conducted among triathletes based from the Philippines and Dubai evaluating their knowledge and practices concerning sun exposure and protection.

**Results:** There were 120 respondents from the Philippines, while 64 from Dubai. Almost half of the Filipino athletes had inadequate knowledge, while majority (83%) had desirable attitudes. Only 37.5% of the participants practiced good sun protection. Filipino triathletes with Fitzpatrick III phototype had significantly adequate sun protection practices.

In Dubai, the population was predominantly British (55%) and European (20%), and most with Fitzpatrick skin II (49%). Most had adequate knowledge, with no correlation between level of education or salary. Majority also had a favourable attitude towards sun. The triathletes, as expected, had high levels of sun exposure: 70% trained for >1-3 hours/day. The majority (85%) had previously sunburned whilst competing or training, compared with the athletes from the Philippines (72%).

Only 12% of athletes from the Middle East had good sun protection practices compared to 38% from the Filipino triathletes. Also, 25% do not use sunscreen at all and one third only use it in the competing season.

**Conclusion:** The ambient sun exposure of the country of origin and the lack of widespread sun awareness public health campaigns may account for the results. These findings indicate the pressing need for public health strategies on sun protection for the triathlete community.

