



PHOTOBIOLOGY AND PHOTOPROTECTION

TARGETING SUN SAFE BEHAVIOURS IN TEENAGERS AND ADOLESCENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

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Introduction: Skin cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancer. Roughly, 85% of skin cancer cases could be avoided by reducing ultraviolet (UV) exposure, especially during adolescence.

Objective: Evaluate sun safety behaviors in adolescents, as well as, the effects of an innovative intervention in changing sun protection attitudes and behaviours.

Material and Methods: Participants were recruited from 8 secondary school classes in Vancouver, BC. Participants were segregated into the control arm (N=38) or intervention arm (N=138). All participants viewed a 15-minute video on the negative effects of sun exposure. The intervention group also had UV facial photographs taken to reveal UV related damage. Surveys assessing sun safety knowledge and behaviours were administered at 3 time points: prior to the study, immediately afterwards and 6 months after the study.

Results: Education alone and in combination with the intervention significantly improved knowledge immediately afterwards and at 6 months. Both groups showed a change in perception of a tan. With regards to sun safe behaviours, the intervention group showed a statistically significant intention to change with regards to all behaviours assessed (hat, protective clothing, sunglasses, sunscreen, seeking shade). Only the intention to use sunscreen significantly improved in the education only group. The intervention group showed a lasting change in behaviour at 6 months with regards to wearing protective clothing, sunglasses, sunscreen and seeking shade. The educational session alone changed behavior with regards to the use of sunscreen. Additionally, only the intervention group experienced a decrease in the number of sunburns during the following summer.

Conclusions: Our study suggests that education may be beneficial for increasing knowledge, but additional interventions are likely needed to change behavior. As a consequence, we have begun development of intervention programs that could be implemented within schools to improve sun safe behaviours.

