



GLOBAL SKIN HEALTH

NOTHING HEALTHY ABOUT A TAN – INCREASING PREVALENCE OF TANNING ADDICTION

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Background: Since the mid 20th century, it has become socially desirable and acceptable in many western cultures to have a 'healthy tan'. Despite extensive educational efforts directed toward decreasing public exposure to UV light, problematic tanning persists. Multiple explanations as to why people seek UV light have been offered, based on cultural, health-related, socioeconomic and psychologic models. Increasing evidence indicates that tanning may be an addictive behaviour and is associated with other behavioural tendencies. A new metric, the Bergen Tanning Addiction Scale (BTAS), is the first to fully conceptualise tanning addiction within a contemporary framework.

Objective: Given Australia has the highest incidence of melanoma in the world, we chose this population to identify predictors of tanning dependence and addiction using the BTAS.

Materials and Methods: 732 individuals attending for a skin check in 2018 were invited to complete a survey. 485 individuals completed the survey and BTAS.

Results: The mean score in the sample was 2.46 (SD 3.45). Female gender, younger age and increased perceived stress were all associated with increased levels of tanning addiction ($p < .0001$). Positive perception of tanning was associated with increased tanning addiction ($p < .0001$), particularly subjects who were of the belief that tanned skin is healthier than pale skin (mean 3.97 v 2.17 $p < .0001$) and those who reported feeling happier and less stressed after tanning (mean 4.15 v 2.80 $p < .0001$).

Conclusions: Overall, our cohort reports greater levels of tanning addiction using the BTAS than previous studies, and identifies individuals who are at risk of tanning addiction. Increased knowledge of those at risk of tanning addiction will allow for appropriate intervention to be designed.

