

the SPARKstudy

Skin Protection Actions for Risk-prone Kids



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Research

Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, affects more than 1 million individuals in the U.S. and incidence rates are rising. Utah has the highest incidence of melanoma in the U.S. Melanoma is increasingly being diagnosed among younger populations and is now one of the most commonly diagnoses malignancies among women under age 40. As a result, there is a growing population of children who have a parent with a history of melanoma.

Dr. Wu and her research team recently completed a study on children at risk for melanoma to identify factors that impact children's engagement in melanoma preventive behaviors (the SPARK Study). This study was funded in part by a F. Marian Bishop grant from the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine at the University of Utah awarded to Dr. Wu. The team held 6 focus groups with 39 parents and 6 groups with 37 children on melanoma prevention and the obstacles families face when implementing melanoma preventive behaviors. Participating children had a parent who had a history of melanoma.

Despite the experience of having a parent with skin cancer, children who have a family history of melanoma are not optimally adherent to skin protection habits. Through the SPARK study, the Wu team identified barriers to and facilitators of melanoma preventive behaviors in this population (more information below).

As a result of the findings from SPARK, the Wu team developed a behavioral intervention to promote melanoma preventive behaviors among families who have children at-risk for melanoma. The FLARE study (Family Lifestyle Actions and Risk Education) is recruiting families now (FLARE.Study@hci.utah.edu).

Identified **BARRIERS** to healthy skin habits:

- Forgetting
- Lack of time
- Underestimation of sun exposure (e.g., over the course of a day)
- Cost of sun safety products
- Ages and unique personalities of children
- Disliking how sunscreen feels

Identified **FACILITATORS** to healthy skin habits:

- Offering kids/teens various options for sun safety
- Explaining the risks of not protecting skin
- Encouraging kids/teens to take responsibility for sun safe behaviors
- Using different types of protection for different activities
- Adjusting activity scheduling to avoid sun exposure during peak hours (10 am – 4 pm)

DID YOU KNOW?

A person will get a sunburn
30% faster in Salt Lake City
than in Los Angeles.
This is because the UV intensity is
much greater at SLC's high altitude.