

Melanoma Surveillance in the US: Collecting Melanoma Data

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Meg Watson] Hi. I'm Meg Watson, an epidemiologist with CDC's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control. I'm excited to announce the publication of a series of important articles on melanoma surveillance in the United States. The articles are available in the November supplement edition of the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, published October 21, 2011.

Dr. Suephy Chen, a dermatologist from Emory University, is with me today to discuss the articles. Dr. Chen, why do you think these articles are important for dermatologists?

[Dr. Suephy Chen] Meg, these articles give us the most comprehensive look at melanoma in the US to date. Many of these articles use cancer registry data from two national programs, the CDC's National Program of Cancer Registries, or NPCR, and the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results program, or SEER. They include data on more than 45,000 melanomas each year, and cover almost 80 percent of the US population. Previous studies typically included a much smaller proportion of the US population. With such a large study, we can examine melanoma in-depth. For example, one article examines melanoma by race and ethnicity, and found that rates amongst Asians and Hispanics were higher among young women than young men.

[Meg Watson] Do you think this supplement might change the way dermatologists practice?

[Dr. Suephy Chen] Well, since melanomas are often diagnosed in dermatology offices rather than hospitals, collecting data on them can be more difficult than for other types of cancer. I hope this supplement will underscore the importance of cancer registry data for dermatologists, given that many melanomas are diagnosed in dermatology offices. I was a co-author on an article that looked at awareness of reporting requirements amongst dermatologists. We found low knowledge of these requirements. We also found that few dermatologists actually reported melanomas, even when they knew they were supposed to.

[Meg Watson] Are all dermatologists supposed to report to the cancer registries?

[Dr. Suephy Chen] Dermatologists in private practice should report, and pathology labs and dermatopathologists should also be reporting. Hospitals should have systems set up so that all cases diagnosed or treated in that facility will be reported. Dermatologists working in hospitals, like I do, don't generally have to report individually, because the facility should be doing it.

[Meg Watson] You said that dermatologists and path labs are both supposed to report. Wouldn't that result in cancers being counted twice?

[Dr. Suephy Chen] That's a good question, but no. Cancer registries have systems in place to identify and de-duplicate cancer cases. Since the medical record and the pathology report contain different information, reports from multiple sources are important.

[Meg Watson] Are dermatologists supposed to be reporting *all* skin cancers?

[Dr. Suephy Chen] Among skin cancers, melanomas are always reportable, whether they are in situ or invasive. The more common basal and squamous cell skin cancers aren't reportable, unless they are in the anogenital areas. Rare types of skin cancers are also reportable. If a dermatologist has a question, he or she should contact the state registry.

[Meg Watson] So, what should a private practice dermatologist do, in terms of reporting, once he or she has diagnosed a melanoma?

[Dr. Suephy Chen] The cancer registries are state-based, and each state has their own process. Doctors need to contact the registry in their state for specific procedures. To find your local cancer registry, visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/npcr. It will take you to a map and you can click on your state for information on how to contact your local registry.

[Meg Watson] What else would you like dermatologists to know about the supplement?

[Dr. Suephy Chen] We have a continuing medical education activity, or CME, with questions and answers available to go along with the supplement. This CME activity will highlight the clinical take-home messages from the articles. After reading the articles, dermatologists and other providers can take an online test for the CME credit.

[Meg Watson] Great. Thanks, Dr. Chen. Again, for more information about cancer registries, please visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/npcr.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.