



Ghent, 2 May 2024

Dear members of EADO,

It was exciting to help coordinate these global recommendations on UV protection based on the available scientific evidence and expert consensus.

Is there anything new ?

The combination of seeking shade, protection by clothing and the use of sunscreens has been well established. However in real life people tend to overestimate the protection provided by sunscreens feeling safe when they go out sunbathing using a sunscreen. A report of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) concluded that sunscreen use does not offer protection in conditions of intentional sun exposure. There are strong indications that this may even induce a new risk behavior for skin cancer, especially melanoma. Overall reaching adequate UV protection in the general population will involve a reduction of intentional sun exposure, implying a change in the culture of sunbathing / tanning.

Why is this so important ?

UV protection has a positive return of investment, meaning that investment will save money in the end due to lower disease numbers. At present already 1 in every 3 cancers diagnosed is a skin cancer according to WHO. Europe has the global lead in the number of UV attributable cancer cases with the highest number of melanoma cases worldwide and the second highest number of keratinocyte cancers. This is already felt in clinical practice. Further increases are expected for the coming decades and exposure to UV is the dominant driver. Reduction of avoidable UV exposure constitutes an important pillar in managing the skin cancer epidemic.

What are the next steps ?

It will be important to spread these recommendations to the broad public, to healthcare providers and to health authorities, as the next step to their implementation in daily life. Translation in different

languages may be a first step to facilitate access. Creating an inclusive communication to the general population that results in behavioral changes is a huge challenge that may require the expertise of public health workers and community psychologists; it may be good to learn from the experiences in Australia in this field. The 'open questions' on possible health and environmental effects of UV protection and sunscreens deserve further attention, as unclarities may trigger public confusion, misconceptions and anti-science messages. EuroSkin with the help of EADO will be launching a survey to evaluate primary prevention actions taken by the health authorities of different European countries. This may result in a European UV primary prevention barometer giving an overview of the actions (to be) taken by each country.

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