NEW SURVEY FINDS MANY PEOPLE ARE NOT EXAMINING THEIR SKIN FOR SIGNS OF SKIN CANCER OR GETTING SCREENED BY A HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER

SCHAUMBURG, ILL. (May 17, 2010) – Despite the fact that skin cancer is the only cancer that can be seen on the surface of the skin, a new survey by the American Academy of Dermatology (Academy) reports that a large number of people are not taking the time to examine their skin for any changes that could be warning signs of skin cancer or seeing a health-care provider for a skin cancer screening.

The “Suntelligence: How Sun Smart is Your City?” online survey polled more than 7,000 adults nationwide to determine their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors toward tanning, sun protection and skin cancer detection. Twenty-six cities were ranked based on respondents’ answers to several questions in each category.

“Each year, substantially more than 1 million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in the United States,” said dermatologist Zoe D. Draelos, MD, FAAD, consulting professor at Duke University School of Medicine, Durham, N.C. “Like many cancers, skin cancer is highly treatable if caught early before it spreads. In fact, studies show that the five-year survival rate for people whose melanoma is detected and treated before it spreads to the lymph nodes is 99 percent – making early detection essential.”

However, the survey found that more than one-quarter (28 percent) of all respondents indicated never examining their skin for changes to moles and other skin blemishes. Analyzing the data by gender and age, more men (32 percent) than women (25 percent) indicated that they never examine their skin. In addition, more young adults 18-29 years old (32 percent) reported never examining their skin than any other age group.

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When asked about getting screened for skin cancer by a health-care provider, about three in five respondents (59 percent) had never been examined. More young adults age 18-29 (69 percent) reported never getting screened for skin cancer by a health-care provider.

“The fact that younger people are not getting screened for skin cancer is alarming, especially since research shows that melanoma – the most serious form of skin cancer – is the most common form of cancer for young adults 25-29 years old and the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults 15-29 years old,” said Dr. Draelos.

To help people of all ages spot any new or developing lesions that could be potential warning signs of skin cancer, the Academy recommends periodic self-examinations of the entire body (including hard-to-reach spots). Dr. Draelos added that enlisting the help of a loved one can be beneficial in monitoring changes in the skin and spotting skin cancer.

“Studies show that involving a partner in the self-examination process and having regular screenings by a health-care provider can improve the early detection of skin cancer,” explained Dr. Draelos. “These types of regular screenings could lead to fewer deaths if skin cancer is caught early in its most treatable stages.”

To enhance a patient’s ability to detect skin cancer, the Academy advises learning the ABCDEs of Melanoma Detection. The following are characteristics of moles for which individuals should check their skin:

- **Asymmetry** (one half unlike the other half)
- **Border** (irregular, scalloped or poorly defined)
- **Color** (varies from one area to another; shades of tan and brown, black; sometimes white, red or blue)
- **Diameter** (the size of a pencil eraser or larger)
- **Evolving** (changing in size, shape or color)

“A mole with any of these characteristics, or one that is an ‘ugly duckling’, meaning it looks different from the rest, should be brought to a dermatologist’s attention,” said Dr. Draelos.

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In addition, the Academy offers a body mole map, a tool individuals can use to track their moles. The map provides information on how to perform a skin exam, images of the ABCDEs of Melanoma Detection and space for people to track their moles to determine any changes over time.

May is Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month®. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the Academy’s National Melanoma/Skin Cancer Screening Program. Since the program’s inception in 1985, dermatologists have volunteered to conduct more than 2 million free skin cancer screenings across the country and detected more than 200,000 suspicious lesions. Visit www.melanomamondays.org to take the Academy’s “Suntelligence” survey, as well as to find out how to perform a skin self-exam, download a body mole map or find free skin cancer screenings in your area.

The “Suntelligence” survey was conducted for the Academy by RH Research of Chicago from January 12 to January 31, 2010. A total of 7,116 respondents completed the online survey; more than 200 completes were conducted in each of the 26 selected MSAs (metropolitan statistical area) and an additional 1,123 completes were conducted in the U.S. outside of the MSAs. The survey’s margin of error was ±1.2 percent for national data and ±6.9 percent for results stratified by MSA.

Headquartered in Schaumburg, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology (Academy), founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 16,000 physicians worldwide, the Academy is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the Academy at 1-888-462-DERM (3376) or www.aad.org.

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Editor’s Note: Key highlights of the “Suntelligence: How Sun Smart is Your City?” survey and a complete listing of the 26 most and least sun-smart cities are available at www.aad.org/media.