

COUNSELING CHILDREN ON SUN PROTECTION AND AVOIDING INDOOR TANNING: RESULTS OF A 2014 SURVEY OF US PEDIATRICIANS AND COMPARISON TO THE 2002 SURVEY

Author: Sophie Balk

Co-authors: Karen O'Connor

Introduction:

Skin cancer prevention (SCP) continues to be a priority of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP surveyed its members via the Periodic Survey of Fellows in 2002 and 2014 to explore pediatricians' experiences and attitudes regarding counseling children and adolescents on sun protection (SP); questions regarding indoor tanning (IT) were added to the 2014 survey.

Methods:

Both surveys were 8-page questionnaires mailed to a random sample of approximately 1,600 US AAP members. Areas of inquiry included extent of and barriers to pediatricians' counseling on SP, and IT (2014 only); beliefs about the importance of SP and avoiding IT; and awareness of legislation regarding minors' access to indoor tanning. Chi-square tests were used to compare responses across survey years.

Outcomes:

Response rates were 43.0% (694/1614) in 2014 and 54.6% (882/1616) in 2002. More pediatricians in 2014 (~ 50%) than in 2002 (~ 40%) reported discussing SP during recent summer months with at least 75% of patients. This pattern was consistent across all age groups, including birth-6 months, 7 months-2 years, 3-9 years, 10-13 years, and >13 years (each $p < .001$).

In 2014, about one-third of pediatricians reported discussing avoiding IT at least once with patients 10-13 years old. About half discussed the topic with patients 14-17 years and half discussed it with patients 18-24 years. Twelve percent said they "regularly" provide counseling on avoiding IT; 29% said they "occasionally" do so. Most (70%) did not know if their state had a law on minors' access to indoor tanning.

More pediatricians in 2014 than in 2002 named lack of sufficient time in well visits as a barrier to SCP counseling (65% vs 58% strongly agree/agree, $p < .05$). Although ranked as important in both years, SP ranked lowest among all listed preventive topics: 69% in 2014 and 73% in 2002 rated SP as very important/important (NS).

Relevance:

Although improved, SP counseling rates remain relatively low; counseling about IT also can be improved. As clinician counseling is believed to positively impact patients' SCP behaviors, and time constraints are main barriers, creative solutions will be needed to augment pediatricians' counseling practices.