

Sun protective behaviour and knowledge of schoolchildren in western Switzerland

Simone Ackermann¹, Anne Vuadens¹, Jean-Luc Bulliard²

¹ Faculty of Biology and Medicine, Lausanne University, Switzerland

² Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine (IUMSP), Lausanne Hospital University (CHUV), Switzerland

IUMSP

Institut universitaire de médecine sociale et préventive, Lausanne

Unil

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

CHUV

Background

Switzerland:

- Highest incidence of melanoma in Europe (26.8 and 25.4/100,000 men and women, respectively)
- Longstanding prevention campaigns (since late 80s)

Cutaneous melanoma:

- Importance of excessive sun exposure during childhood

But ... little information about sun protection behaviour and knowledge of Swiss children

Objectives

Investigate Swiss schoolchildren's :

- Sun-related **knowledge**
- **Source of information** about dangers of UV and means of protection
- **Attitude** towards a suntan
- **Sunburn**
- Sun protective **behaviour**
- **Role of parents** in their sun protection

Study population and Methods

Study population:

- 18 **public schools** of La Chaux-de-Fonds (west Switz.)
- 1'268 pupils: 5th, 8th, 11th grades (age: 9, 12 and 15 years)
- Participation rate: 91% (n=1'154)

Questionnaires:

- Filled during school lessons
- Simpler and shorter for primary schoolchildren (5th grade)

Descriptive statistics

Multivariate logistic regression analyses

Results

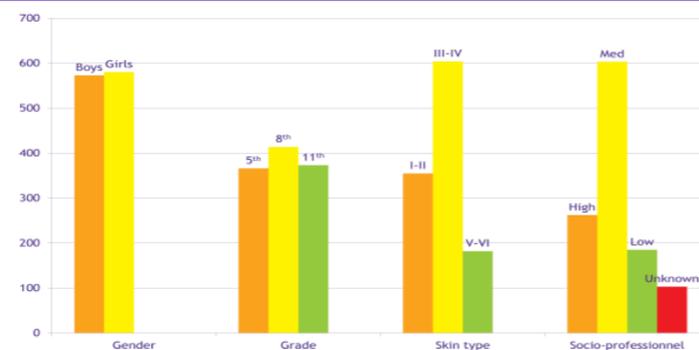


Fig 1. Distribution of socio-demographic characteristics and phototype

Sun-related knowledge

- High overall, especially for skin cancer risk and most susceptible phototype
- Increased with age

Source of information

- 76% Parents > 11% School > 9% Media

Attitude

- 55% reported a pro-tan attitude
- **Predictors of preference for a tanned skin :**
 - Skin type III-IV / lower socio-professional status
 - Higher sun-related knowledge

Self-reported sunburn (last 12 months)

- 60% at least one sunburn, 30% at least two
- 43% severe sunburns (painful or blistering)
- **Predictors of at least two sunburns:**
 - Younger age / Fair skin
 - Regular sunscreen use
 - Preference for a tan / higher knowledge

Protective behaviour (in summer)

- 69% regularly applied sunscreen
- 33% sought purposely shade
- 32% wore covering clothes
- Protective behaviour decreased with age, darker skin and pro-tan attitude

Predictors of :

Routine sunscreen use: female / younger age / fair skin / higher socio-professional status / preference for untanned skin

Seeking shade: fair skin / pro-tan attitude

Covering clothes: younger age / preference for untanned skin / routine sunscreen use

Parental encouragement / sensitization

- Higher among fair-skinned and higher socio-professional classes
- Increased sunscreen use and wear of sun protective clothes

Conclusions

Despite high sun awareness, sun protective behaviour and attitude of Swiss children are inadequate.

Suggestions for sun prevention of children and teenagers in Switzerland include :

- **Changing the pro-tan attitude :** Breaking the link: tanning = health + beauty
- **Intervention:** Multi-component community-wide programs involving: **Parents / Teachers / Peers / GPs**
- **Channels:** Social networks / New communication technologies

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