

Love Your Skin

Project details

Sponsor: NHS Devon

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The background

Skin cancer rates have quadrupled in the last 40 years and now account for one-third of all new cancers in the United Kingdom. It is the second most common cancer among 15-34 year olds, yet approximately 80% of skin cancers could be prevented through avoiding excessive lifetime ultraviolet exposure.

'Love your Skin' is a flagship project by NHS Devon, focusing upon behaviour change to reduce long-term skin cancer rates amongst young people attending Devon colleges. Young people are shown their skin under UV light to highlight sun damage to their own skin, and then given advice on how to minimise this through sun protection, reducing sunbed use and alternatives such as fake tanning. The intervention was piloted at Exeter College in May 2011.

The research

This project is the first stage of the research undertaken by Bristol Social Marketing Centre into perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of young people related to sun protection and sunbed use following the 2012 'Love your Skin' intervention in Devon colleges. During September 2012, follow-up data will be gathered.

The project aims to increase the intervention, piloted in 2011, to 500 participants aged between 15-34 years old across three Devon colleges, evaluating both short-term impact on all participants, and long-term intentions and behaviour of teenage participants.

792 people took part in the intervention, 601 of whom were aged 15-19, our key target group. Of these, 86 responded to take part in the Bristol Social Marketing Centre Survey, and this was matched with 88 control group respondents, a response rate of 14%.

Results

Avoiding the sun, covering up, and reducing time in the sun are less attractive options to the target group than using high factor sunscreen. Longer-term messages, e.g. checking moles, are also less well received.

Relatively few respondents in either group used sunbeds, or would consider using them.

Sunscreen use is more highly associated with being abroad than at home in the UK, however there are promising signs that if sunscreen is being used, it is SPF15 or more.

While the UV scanning may be useful for drawing young people into getting involved in the intervention, it appears to be the personal advice and personal tips on tanning that make more difference, indicating the value of one-to-one interventions whether peer- or tutor-led.

Project outputs

This is the baseline findings for an intervention delivered in the spring, and the behavioural outcomes for which will be evaluated after the summer, therefore limited conclusions can be drawn at this point as, with low levels of UK sunshine this spring, there has been little chance for students to put their learning into practice.

Publications

[Article from BBC Scotland "UV skin damage scanner tours Scottish shopping centres"](#)