

Letter to the Editor

Dermatologists know that ultraviolet (UV) rays are the single most preventable cause of skin cancer. The United States Department of Health and Human Services has stated that UV radiation causes cancer, and that UV radiation from artificial sources such as tanning beds and sun lamps is just as dangerous as UV radiation from the sun and should be avoided.

In fact, indoor tanning is associated with a 75 percent increase in the risk of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Melanoma incidence rates have been increasing for at least 30 years and melanoma is increasing faster in young women (15-29 years old) than in young men in the same age group – and a major difference in behavior is that women are more likely to use indoor tanning beds.

Indoor tanning is particularly troubling because it is unnecessary – it is practiced solely for short-term cosmetic reasons. Individuals who use tanning beds are intentionally putting their health at risk. If you want to look tan, you should consider using a self-tanning product, but continue to protect your skin from UV radiation.

A dermatologist can be a resource for information about skin cancer prevention which can help your readers make informed decisions about their health.

Sincerely,

The Iowa Dermatologic Society