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Sunscreen Practices and Preferences of Skin of Color Patients

Sunscreen is a protective topical product that can protect the skin against damage caused by exposure to UV radiation. When used regularly, sunscreen can help prevent sunburn, skin cancer and premature aging. Despite extensive research confirming its benefits, sunscreen usage varies widely across different demographic groups, particularly among individuals with skin of color. This cross-sectional, survey-based study aims to investigate the sunscreen usage patterns, preferences, and barriers among Non-Hispanic White (NHW) and Skin of Color (SOC) individuals. One hundred and fifty Individuals from SUNY Downstate Medical Center were surveyed throughout January 2024. Results show that NHW individuals were found to be more likely to wear sunscreen on a daily basis (31% NHW vs 25% SOC) and reapply sunscreen at least once a day (76% NHW vs 45% SOC) compared to SOC individuals. Though SOC individuals demonstrate a willingness to use sunscreen, they face barriers including cost (2% NHW vs 16% SOC), lack of knowledge in finding suitable products (22% NHW vs 41% SOC), and concerns about white cast (7% NHW vs 25% SOC). Furthermore, SOC individuals demonstrate lower awareness regarding the differences between mineral and chemical sunscreens (49% NHS vs 29% SOC), are less likely to receive sunscreen education from dermatologists (36% NHW vs 22% SOC), and exhibit a preference for sunscreen brands owned by people of color (13% NHW vs 47% SOC). These findings shed light on the unique needs and challenges of SOC individuals in adopting sun protection measures, thereby highlighting the necessity of culturally competent patient education in dermatological care. In addressing these disparities, healthcare professionals can more effectively promote sun protection practices across diverse patient groups.