

PA News: Protect Your Skin and Practice



WASHINGTON
**Medical
Commission**
Licensing. Accountability. Leadership.

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It's summertime! When the sun comes out and the weather warms up, the people of the Northwest flock outside to the beaches of lakes, rivers, and ocean. We also head up to the hills to hike, bike, and camp and to the parks to play with our children, dogs, and picnic with friends and family. Break out the sunscreen!

1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer by the age of 70, a statistic posted by the Skin Cancer Foundation. Washington is among the top 12 states for skin cancer with approximately 4,000 residents diagnosed with skin melanoma in 2014. Jefferson, Island, King, San Juan, Kitsap, Skagit and Snohomish counties had the highest rates in the state. It is thought that the Puget Sound area has higher rates based off the fact that skies are often overcast with cooler temperatures, leading people to think they do not need sunscreen. According to the CDC, "80% of the sun's UV rays can pass through clouds and can reflect off surfaces like water, sand, or snow, increasing exposure to UV radiation".

So, what does this have to do with the Medical Commission? We often see cases where providers from primary care and dermatology remove lesions from the skin, either by punch or shave biopsy, and then throw away the tissue. This can be acceptable in the case of

an obvious seborrheic keratosis, skin tag, or sebaceous cyst, if there is precise documentation as to the site, size, and description of the lesion. The risk is that the lesion is more than what it appears, like an amelanotic melanoma, Merkel Cell Carcinoma, pigmented basal cell carcinoma, or sebaceous carcinoma. When you miss the diagnosis because you tossed the sample/specimen, you may potentially cause harm to the patient.



The jury is out and there are many opinions in the Dermatology community as to whether you should send every biopsy out for pathology processing. To be honest, there is no right or wrong answer. I personally send anything that isn't a skin tag out for pathology as do the physicians that I have worked with in my 16 year dermatology career.

The bottom line: document, document, document. Take a photo and put it in the chart for future reference. Make sure you discuss and document the ramifications of not sending a biopsy out for pathology with the patient as part of your informed consent. And make sure you have an appropriate follow up plan with the patient if the lesion does not resolve or recurs.

And don't forget to wear your sunscreen and advise your patients to wear theirs! SPF 30 should do the trick, all year round here in Washington! Happy Summer!

Health Care's Role in Achieving Social Change



Social determinants of health

The Medical Commission hosts an educational conference every year in place of a regular meeting. The conference is free and open to the public. We encourage all who are interested to attend.

This year we are pleased to host subject matter experts discussing Health Care's Role in Achieving Social Change.

Visit our [web page](#) for more information and [register now](#).

When: October 4-5, 2019

Where: The Hilton at Sea-Tac

Cost: Free