



Photoeducation in Health

Fotoeducación en Salud

Fotoeducação em Saúde

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Skin cancer is the most frequent and predictable carcinoma of all, with a representative prevalence in Brazil, mainly due to the predominance of the tropical climate and the high incidence of solar radiation. This neoplasm is divided into two major groups, melanoma and non-melanoma¹ and although non-melanoma cancer is the most common type and has a low fatality rate² is considered a public health problem because it represents a high social and economic cost for the patient and the health system³.

In addition to excessive exposure to solar radiation, other factors can increase the risk of developing skin cancer, such as: light skin, eyes and hair; family history of skin cancer; weakened immune system from disease or use of photosensitizing drugs, which increase the absorption of ultraviolet light through the skin⁴.

Mechanical protection, using clothes, hats and sunglasses; or chemical protection, with the application of sunscreen, are simple measures that can prevent skin pathologies originated or motivated by exposure to sunlight, known as photodermatoses. The use of sunscreen is indicated to reduce the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation and, consequently, prevent skin cancer. However, it is important to emphasize the available sun protection factors (SPF), the need for an effective sunscreen against ultraviolet A and B radiation and the minimum amount necessary for the product to protect against the sun's rays. The recommended amount of sunscreen to evenly cover the skin, considering its irregularities, is 2 mg/cm². However, in practice, users apply less than the recommended amount, resulting in a significant decrease in the actual protection achieved.

As skin cancer affects the population gradually, that is, cumulatively, there is little concern in the prevention of this disease, which usually occurs through prolonged exposure to the sun. However, prevention is more economical than treatment, and it is essential to present information, especially to risk groups, for a better understanding of the magnitude of the problem. In this scenario, a term widely used is that of photoeducation, which can be defined as a set of actions of an educational nature, developed to raise awareness of a certain population group about the risks of inadvertent exposure to the sun and to guide healthy behaviors in photoprotection⁵.

Prevention and awareness measures, through campaigns and health education actions, are essential for the protection habits to be properly shared with the population, presenting reliable scientific evidence, in addition to accessible language. Simple guidelines such as the use of hats, glasses, appropriate clothing, avoiding inappropriate times of exposure to the sun and the use of sunscreens can contribute in an extremely positive way to the primary prevention of the effects of excessive sun exposure.

Photoeducation in health highlights the performance of three priority segments: health professionals, valuing prevention and promotion as much as curative practices; managers, supporting these professionals; and the population, building their knowledge and increasing their autonomy in care, individually and collectively.

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Health professionals deserve to be highlighted in photoeducation campaigns and events, as they are able to play an important role in health promotion, informing the population about official recommendations related to sun protection. More specifically, the pharmacist is the health professional available in drugstores, a place considered strategic, for having direct contact with possible users of sunscreens.

There is no denying the likely positive impacts on the lifestyle of the public participating in photoeducation actions. The awareness of the need to use photoprotective products and mechanical means of protection that, together, will help in the prevention of photodermatoses and neoplasms, allows changes in habits. In addition to the possibility of exchanging experiences and knowledge between all those involved, creating a network of education and individual autonomy in the care of their health.

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