



## PRESS RELEASE

### Occupational disease skin cancer?

Mountain guides and ski instructors are particularly affected by UV-exposure

**Berlin, 08.03.2012** – Ultraviolet radiation (UV-light) is the most important cause of the development of skin cancer. Both the UVB and the longer-wavelength UVA-radiation induce light damages of the skin. People who often spend time outdoors are particularly at risk. Especially in the mountains the UV-radiation is very intensive. Beside the high UV-risk for children, especially during their stay in the mountains, people who are subject to an especially intense UV exposure due to their work are focused on. The ozone layer protecting the earth against the dangerous UV- radiation was up to 40 percent thinner than ever for the first time in April 2011. This radiation corresponds to the regular sun exposure in midsummer.

#### Occupational Exposure

In Germany about 2,5 million employees are exposed to a natural work-related UV-radiation - and therefore have a higher risk to develop skin cancer. Nevertheless, the connection between the occupational UV-exposure and the risk of skin cancer is still underestimated. According to "Deutsche Berufskrankheiten-Verordnung (BKV) the recognition of skin cancer as an occupational disease is not yet possible. Epidemiological studies show now a relevant connection: People who often work outdoors have a higher risk of squamous cell carcinoma, a type of non melanoma skin cancer.

"For outdoor workers the risk to get non melanoma skin cancer is two to three times higher compared with people who do not work outdoors", warns PD Dr. Martin Radespiel-Tröger of the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg. That is an important criterion for the recognition of skin cancer as an occupational disease.

#### Establish prevention measures

"Regardless of the establishment of new occupational morbidity for skin cancer due to a work-related UV-exposure, prevention measures are urgently needed for employees with a higher risk of skin cancer", demands Prof. Dr. med. Thomas Diepgen, medical director of the department of clinical social medicine of the University of Heidelberg.

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Changes in behavior should focus on avoiding the direct exposure of UV-radiation between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., wearing suitable clothes, applying sunscreen regularly and finding the shadow. Furthermore, studies showed that the application of sunscreen on a regular basis protect against the development of UV induced skin tumors.

### **Note the sun account**

“One sunburn in childhood is already the highest risk factor to get skin cancer later in life. Ultimate ambition of a consecutive UV-prophylaxis is the avoidance of acute photo damages and the minimization of the risk to get non melanoma skin cancer”, emphasizes Prof. Sr. Eggert Stockfleth, head of the Skin Cancer Center Charité (SCCC) in Berlin. Surveys of the European Skin Cancer Foundation (ESCF) among 3400 families showed that about 21 percent of the children had one to five sunburns already. Not only a sunburn has to be avoided but also an excessive UV-exposure in childhood. If the “sun account” is full already in early childhood, they develop skin cancer in young adulthood.

### **Background information**

Skin cancer has become the most frequent cancer disease at all. In the last years the cases of skin cancer have already passed the total number of the other types of cancer. It is an alarming development: In Germany alone about 220000 people per year get non melanoma skin cancer (actinic keratosis, squamous cell carcinoma and basal cell carcinoma). Therefore it is important to inform the population, doctors and the public health about the risk factors of non melanoma skin cancer with the help of awareness campaigns. Only then, suitable prevention measures, like the right application of sunscreen, can be taken.

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