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Are adult cystic fibrosis patients aware of the importance of skin health and sun protection?

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With increasing life expectancy patients with CF are encountering medical complications that historically have never been an issue. Over the last 10 years three patients with CF have been diagnosed with skin malignancy at the Leeds Adult CF unit. Specific risk factors in CF include photosensitive medication, such as ciprofloxacin and anti-fungals, as well as immune suppression post-transplant. In view of this we undertook a questionnaire based survey of our adult patients' behaviours regarding sun health. The questionnaire was handed out to patients at routine outpatient appointments.

Results to date indicate that two thirds of our patients have been sunburnt in the last 12 months. Over half of patients never use any form of sun protection when going out in the sun and only 17% use sun cream most or all of the time. Over 40% of patients had used tanning beds in the past with a third of these using them regularly over the past 12 months. These high risk behaviours were also seen in patients post-lung transplant. In terms of medications almost 60% were able to name medications that increased the risk of sunburn; however, 20% did not know that medications increased the risk.

Once the study is completed we plan to implement an educational programme for patients. Particular attention will be paid to high risk groups such as post-transplant patients, patients who have had skin cancer, and patients who have a family history of cancer.