

## COMPELLING COMMENTS

### Social Media and Skin Cancer Prevention: A Promising Platform for Education Among Adolescents and Young Adults

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With an increase in social media usage, patients and healthcare professionals have taken to platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to promote awareness about several diseases and health conditions.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, 39% of adults turn to social media for health information.<sup>1</sup> The rising incidence of skin cancer allows for the novel use of social media to encourage skin cancer education and prevention.<sup>1</sup> This platform may specifically benefit adolescents and young adults, as melanoma has been identified as the third most common cancer among patients aged 15-39.<sup>1</sup>

Instagram is a popular social media platform which garners 1 billion users each month, 90% of which are less than 35 years of age<sup>1</sup>. Instagram was identified as the social media platform with the highest number of postings about skin cancer awareness.<sup>1</sup> One study examining Instagram posts related to skin cancer found that content mostly focused on skin cancer treatment, the impact of sun exposure, and specific preventative measures such as the use of sunscreen and protective gear.<sup>2</sup> Nearly one-quarter of the posts discussed the ABCDEs of melanoma.<sup>2</sup>

Studies have shown an increase in sunscreen usage among middle and high

school students in recent years. Among U.S. adolescents in grades 6-12, average mean sunscreen usage increased by 4% for every consecutive year between 2007 and 2019.<sup>3</sup> These findings are reassuring when compared to 1999-2009, which saw an overall decrease in sunscreen usage among adolescents.<sup>3</sup> Authors cited increased skin cancer prevention content on social media as a potential explanation for the increased sunscreen use among teens.<sup>3</sup>

Dermatologists, healthcare professionals, and medical societies, like the American Academy of Dermatology, have successfully utilized social media for patient education. These social media educators should consider creating content specifically for adolescents and young adults to highlight techniques for skin cancer prevention and identification.

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