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Tanning services still widely used by Ontario teens, despite provincial ban

TORONTO, Sept. 5, 2017 – Ontario teens are still getting the burn despite the province’s [Skin Cancer Prevention Act](#), which prohibits the sale of tanning services or ultraviolet light treatments for tanning to adolescents, according to a report released today by the Ontario Sun Safety Working Group (OSSWG). The title of the report is [First year of a ban on tanning beds and lamps among adolescents in Ontario, Canada \(2017\)](#).

The report discovered that after the Act had gone into effect, there was no drop in the use of tanning beds or lamps amongst youth under 18 years old. In fact, the use of tanning beds and lamps by teens increased modestly (7.9% vs. 6.9% in the 12 months before the enactment of the Act). Of those teenage respondents who report using these tanning devices, 78% stated they began using them within one year after the Act came into effect. These adolescents said they are primarily using tanning beds and lamps in commercial establishments, which are covered by the legislation.

“The Skin Cancer Prevention Act was a critical step forward in protecting young people from the risks associated with tanning,” said Dr. Thomas Tenkate, a co-author of the report and the co-chair of the OSSWG. “Learning that there was no significant change in tanning bed or lamp use amongst youth points to the need for more to be done to protect Ontario teens.”

Other findings from the report include:

- There was a small increase (17% to 21%) in the percentage of tanning bed or lamp users who were refused tanning services at least once
- In the year that the Act came into effect, most (72%) of those who were denied service at least once did not use tanning beds or lamps
- There was an increase (from 57% to 71%) in the percentage of tanning bed/lamp users who noticed health warning signs
- Significantly more tanning bed/lamp users were required to use protective eyewear in the year after the Act came into effect (92% to 99%)

Recommendations

“The effectiveness of the legislation can be improved. We cannot rely on tanning services operators to routinely check for identification and refuse services to youth”, said Dr. Cheryl Rosen, from the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA), a co-author of the report and past chair of the OSSWG. “We need to work on changing beliefs that tanning makes one more attractive.”

The OSSWG recommends that the Government of Ontario enhances the enforcement of the legislation to ensure that tanning service providers are complying with the Act and that a public education program targeting teens and parents is developed to highlight the risks of tanning beds and lamps. Additionally, a comprehensive and long-term evaluation of the Act needs to be conducted to look at the incidence of tanning bed and lamp use and the enforcement of, and compliance with the Act.

“The report shows that in the rare instances where youth were refused tanning services, it significantly deterred youth from using tanning equipment” said John Atkinson, a co-author of the report and Director of Cancer Prevention, Canadian Cancer Society. “Although industry compliance and improved public education are essential, it’s also important that parents look at their sun behaviour since parental tanning habits are a strong predictor of youth tanning habits,” said Dr. Jennifer Beecker, National Chair of the CDA’s Sun Awareness Program.

About the Report

The report’s intention was to measure whether or not the Skin Cancer Prevention Act impacted adolescents’ use of tanning beds and lamps and their attitudes toward tanning.

The surveys, upon which the report was based, were commissioned by OSSWG members including the Canadian Cancer Society, Cancer Care, Ontario, and Ryerson University. Ipsos Reid was contracted to conduct a pre-legislation online survey (in the spring of 2014) of Ontario adolescents under age 18 in grades 7-12, and subsequently contracted to repeat the survey one year after commencement of the legislation (in spring 2015). The 10 minute pre- and post-questionnaires were designed by a Project Steering Committee, based on the original Canadian Cancer Society questionnaire, and included questions about basic demographics, methods used to obtain or keep a tan, length and location of tanning bed/lamp use, signs/warning labels posted in tanning establishments, tanning beliefs and knowledge, and if eye protection was used when tanning. In 2014, 1,561 adolescents participated in the survey (10% response rate) and 2,305 adolescents participated in 2015 (14% response rate).

Samples were weighted to ensure representativeness with respect to sex and geographic region, according to the 2011 National Household Survey; the same weights were employed for both surveys. Additionally, within each survey, grade-specific weights ensured equal weighting across the six school grades.

- 30 -

About the Ontario Sun Safety Working Group

The Sun Safety Working Group is a partnership of individuals and organizations working together to reduce the impact of solar and artificial ultraviolet (UV) radiation (including indoor tanning equipment) on human health, such as skin cancer and eye diseases.

The goal of the group is to raise awareness of the effects of solar and artificial UV radiation on human health, advocate for the development of policy to reduce UV radiation exposure, and support the delivery of a consistent public health approach to skin cancer prevention in Ontario. For more information visit www.UVOntario.ca

About the CDA

The Canadian Dermatology Association, founded in 1925, represents Canadian dermatologists. The association provides easy access to the largest, most reliable source of medical knowledge on dermatology. CDA exists to advance the science and art of medicine and surgery related to the care of the skin, hair and nails; provide continuing professional development for its members; support and advance patient care; provide public education on sun protection and other aspects of skin health; and promote a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. By doing so, CDA informs and empowers both medical professionals and the Canadian public. To learn

more about the work CDA does, visit <http://www.dermatology.ca> or join the conversation on <http://www.Twitter.com/CdnDermatology> or www.Facebook.com/CdnDermatology

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Citation

Atkinson, J; Cawley, C; Marrett, L; McWhirter, J; Nadalin, V; Rosen, C.F; Tenkate, T.D. (2017). An assessment of the first year of a ban on tanning beds and lamps among adolescents in Ontario, Canada. Toronto: Ontario Sun Safety Working Group.