P205 How to reach the diagnosis of melanoma? The importance of Skin Self-examination. An observational retrospective cohort-study of 711 patients with melanoma

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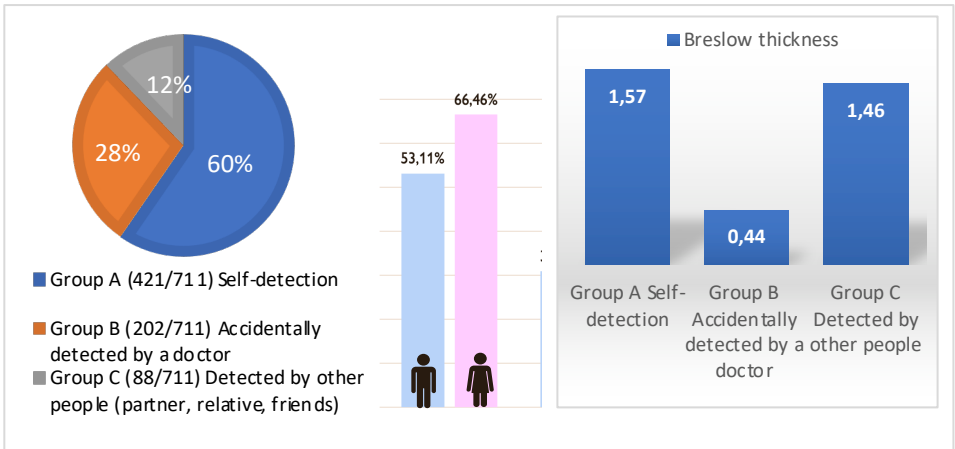[1]Department of Clinical-Surgical, Diagnostic and Pediatric Sciences, University of Pavia, Pavia, Italy. s.barruscotti@smatteo.pv.it
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Background: Cutaneous melanoma (CM) represents about 4% of skin tumours and the 75% of deaths related to skin tumours. Its frequency is increasing sharply throughout the world and in the last years the number of cases of melanoma has doubled. Skin self-examination (SSE) is very important for the early diagnosis of melanoma. SSE and self-recognition of a suspect malignant lesion can lead to an early diagnosis of melanoma and therefore to a better prognosis.

Methods: We collected the results of a questionnaire submitted to patients with melanoma in follow-up at the Dermatological Clinic of IRCCS Policlinico San Matteo Foundation, Pavia. We asked the patients if the melanoma was recognized by the patient himself (group A), accidentally by the doctor (dermatologist or general practitioner) during a visit for another medical problem (group B) or by other people (partners, relatives, friends) (group C). We correlated the data obtained with the site and histotype of melanoma, with the demographic, phenotypic and clinical data of the patients.

■ Group A (421/711) Self-detection

■ Group B (202/711) Accidentally detected by a doctor

■ Group C (88/711) Detected by other people (partner, relative, friends)

Results: Group A was represented by 59% of patients, group B one by 28% of patients and group C by 12% of patients. In particular, within group C, 56% was represented by the partner, 22% by a close relative, 16% by a friend and 6% by professional figures such as beauticians or hairdressers. We found that self-diagnosis was most common in females than in men. The self-detection rate was 66,46% in females and 53,11% in men. We observed that the mean Breslow thickness was 1.57 mm in group A, 1.46 mm in group C and 0.44 mm in group B. Melanomas located in easily visible skin sites were found more (68.5%) than those in hidden sites (49.8%). The subtype of melanoma most frequently encountered by patients is the nodular type. Melanoma is recognized more frequently by the patient if ulcerated or larger than one cm. (Pr = 0.000).

Conclusions: Most melanomas are recognized by the patient himself, however in an already advanced stage. Educating and raising awareness about skin self-examination can increase the detection of melanoma in its early stages. Educational messages should be targeted to general population for the early diagnosis of melanoma. It is important to improve self-efficacy with provision of training, involvement of a skin check partner, motivational materials, and clinician feedback on technique.

References:
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