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POSTER

PLATFORM PRESENTATION

Teen-agers' sunbed use in Sweden 2010

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Introduction:

Sunbed use in Sweden among adolescents has been high according to studies in the 1990's. In yearly investigations 2005-2010 of the adult population's tanning habits, sunbed use in the youngest age group (18-24 y) has been high too (40%) and skin burns inflicted by sunbeds in that age group among those who do use sunbeds have been alarmingly common (10-20%). Recent data for persons under the age of 18y have been missing.

Methods:

The Swedish Radiation Safety Authority (SSM) ordered and financed an investigation of sunbed habits among teen-agers under the age of 18 years from an independent polling institute ("Gullers Grupp", Stockholm). The survey was carried out 6 – 11 December 2010 by telephone interviews among 500 randomly selected youngsters of age 16 – 17 all over Sweden. Prior parental consent was required before making an interview. Then the teen-agers were asked about: 1) any (ever) use of sunbeds the last two years, 2) age 1st time, 3) number of times the last 12 months, 4) questions on reasons for use (3 choices) and on awareness of risk.

Results:

Average ever use of sunbeds was 40 % (boys 25%, girls 75%). Girls (33%) start earlier (14 y) than boys (18%, 14 y). About 30% of both girls and boys had used sunbeds more than 6 times the last 12 months, 40% had used them 2-5 times and 30% only once at most. Awareness of risks is high (75%), also among users (47%).

Conclusion and relevance:

Sunbed use is still high among adolescents and comparable to the youngest adult age group in the surveys 2005-2010. Sunbed burns are likely to be equally common too. SSM, authorized under a law on Radiation Protection, has issued regulations of tanning facilities open to the public. The regulations need to include also the prohibition of use, sale or hire of sunbeds for people below 18 years of age - as previously jointly recommended by Nordic Radiation Safety Authorities 2009.