

IN THIS ISSUE...

From the Melanoma Incidence in Australia to the Role of Essential Fatty Acids in Acne

Claims have been made that the number of new melanomas is decreasing among young Australians as a result of public health campaigns that have focused on sun protection. However this opinion is based on calculation for the whole population and not for the melanoma susceptible, fair-skinned population *per se*. Over the last 30 years large numbers of dark-skinned immigrants have settled in Australia, which in part explains the increase in population from 15 to 22 million. On p. 539–541, the Melbourne-based dermatologist Dr. Douglas Czarnecki challenges the prevailing optimistic view about the melanoma incidence by showing figures calculated specifically for the susceptible population <30 years. He shows that between 1982 and 2009, the melanoma incidence in this subpopulation of Australians has in fact increased from 6.0 to 6.8/100,000. Alas, the public health campaigns may not be as effective as hoped.

Another, but totally benign concern in young people is acne. On p. 521–525 Jung et al. from South Korea hypothesise that essential fatty acids (EFA) might play a role in the pathogenesis and treatment of acne vulgaris. In a controlled trial, 30 acne patients were given daily capsules containing 1,000 mg omega-3-fatty acid or gamma-linoleic acid (GLA) for 10 weeks; a further group of 15 acne patients served as controls. Clinical and biological investigations were conducted. Both types of EFA improved acne and the biopsy results showed decreased skin inflammation and reduced IL-8 immunostaining at the end of the study. However, a major objection to this otherwise well-conducted and interesting study is the fact that the control group did not receive placebo capsules. The clinical results of EFA supplementation are therefore probably overestimated, because the placebo effects in acne trial are usually in the order of 20–30% improvement within 2–3 months. Clearly, more studies are needed to explore the possible effects of EFA in acne.

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