

Consumer Reflections

CRE Consumer Forum - 19th September 2018

The Role of Genetics and Phenotypic Characteristics in Melanoma Development

At our last CRE consumer forum in September, we presented information on genes and phenotypic traits that increase the risk of developing melanoma. Consumers were particularly engaged in this topic as they were concerned about the role of their genes impacting their children and grandchildren in regards to melanoma. Many attendees at the forum were interested in understanding how they can best protect their family from developing melanoma, considering that they personally have been diagnosed with melanoma. Genetic screening was discussed and how to use this information to reduce the risk of melanoma. The implications of genetic testing on private health insurance or life insurance cover was also hotly debated. Some consumers were concerned about undergoing genetic testing for melanoma as it may impact the level of cover and cost of their private health insurance and also in the future for their children.

Sun Exposure and Melanoma

Consumers were aware that sun exposure can increase the risk of developing melanoma. However, many noted that from personal experience their melanoma developed on body areas rarely or never exposed to the sun. This resulted in a lively discussion on whether sun exposure played a significant role in developing melanoma. Exposure to UV radiation can damage the skin and increase the risk of developing melanoma. However, like most other illnesses, sun exposure is not the only risk factor for melanoma. Other factors associated with melanoma include family history, genes and the number of naevi (or moles) on your skin. Thus melanoma can occur anywhere on the body, not just areas that are exposed to sunlight.