

Consumer Reflections

CRE Consumer Forum – 16th October 2019

Cancer prevention: What has psychology got to do with it?

Our last consumer forum was held on the 16th October 2019, discussing the psychological issues surrounding cancer prevention. Guest speaker Associate Professor Samuel Smith from the University of Leeds Institute of Health Sciences presented on the topic “Cancer prevention: What has psychology got to do with it?” In his talk, Dr Smith highlighted the importance of considering how we approach introducing prevention and early detection tests to the people who should use them, and the need to ensure these tests and procedures are acceptable to the community. As oral medications are becoming more commonly used in cancer treatment, Dr Smith also reflected on psychological factors that may impact treatment adherence and thus the effectiveness of these medications.

Screening for the prevention and early detection of skin cancer

Consumers were highly engaged in the discussion and asked a range of questions focused on the importance of early detection of melanoma and other skin cancers. Examples of topics covered included: how often should you have routine skin checks; how do we know if melanoma runs in the family (genetic susceptibility); does melanoma occur with similar frequency on all body sites, or is there a difference by gender and age; do survival rates vary between different types of melanoma; are some melanomas more aggressive than others; whether melanomas commonly come back at previous excision sites; and how the use of artificial intelligence can be used to increase the precision of melanoma early diagnosis.

Consumers were also particularly interested in the use of teledermatology for melanoma screening and early detection. The concept of using tele-diagnostic methods for skin surveillance was well accepted by consumers, however several participants shared they lacked confidence in their own ability to identify the correct suspicious or changing lesions when conducting a skin self-examination. Consumers thought apps with artificial intelligence algorithms that told them whether or not a lesion they selected was anything to worry about would be good to have; and they also wanted apps that helped them to keep track of lesions over time. In addition, consumers felt GPs require better education and training in skin cancer early detection and voiced concerns about the out-of-pocket costs associated with detection and treatment of melanoma and keratinocyte cancers, which was often very costly especially if multiple lesions needed treatment.

Finally, consumers also shared their ideal vision of what a skin check would look like. This involved the concept of a booth, similar to the VECTRA machine, but smaller, anonymous, quick, and easy to reach with instant results. Overall, this forum was very useful for CRE investigators as it helped to develop a better understanding of the psycho-social, behavioural and economic impacts of the detection of melanoma and other skin cancers, and clearly highlighted the support of consumers towards the use of modern digital health technology advances to enhance their experience.