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Effects of race, age and sex on melanoma survivals: A ten years SEER database study

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Introduction: Melanoma first develops in the basal layer of the epidermis in pigment producing melanocytes. The main cause of melanoma is exposure to ultraviolet rays. It is almost curable if treated early but if it metastasizes it can be difficult to treat and many times, fatal. Treatments for melanoma include surgery, immunotherapy, chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Short and long term survival rates of patients diagnosed with this cancer during a ten-year period were reviewed and compared with regards to race, age and sex.

Methods: Data for 50,220 patients diagnosed with melanoma between 1990 and 1999 was analyzed from the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Program of the National Cancer Institute. Patients were organized into groups based on race (black and white), sex and age groups of 0-19, 20-39, 40-59 and 60+ years of age. Twelve and sixty months survival rates were collected for each category.

Results: Survival rates of black females in the 20-39 years of age group were 94.4% and 72.2% for 12 and 60 months respectively. Those rates were significantly higher than for black males of the same age at 66.7% and 50% for 12 and 60 months respectively. Among black females, the 60 months survival rate of the 40-59 year age group was 73.3%. Whereas, among white females of the same age group, five years survival was significantly greater at 91.9%. Finally, in the 60+ year's age group, male and female 60 months survival rates were significantly higher in the white population than in the black population (males 67.4% and 31.4% respectively, females 69.4% and 39.0% respectively).

Conclusions: Multiple discrepancies in the survival rates of melanoma patients were observed across sex, race and various age groups with black race and male sex predictive of decreased survival. Further research is required to explore possible causes of these differences

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