

**Cutaneous Squamous Cell Carcinoma (CSCC) Awareness:
A National Survey
Results Summary**



REGENERON

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Background

Cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma (CSCC) is the second most common cancer in the U.S. and more common than breast, lung, and prostate cancers combined.^{1,2} As a skin cancer, it often takes a backseat to melanoma, even though it is roughly five times more common.^{3,4}

While CSCC has a good prognosis when treated early, approximately 40,000 of the 1 million cases diagnosed annually (roughly 4 percent) are advanced or will progress to an advanced stage.^{4,5} When advanced, CSCC can grow aggressively and become difficult to treat. While estimates may vary because CSCC is not tracked by national cancer registries, approximately 15,000 people die of this skin cancer each year. In comparison, melanoma will cause an estimated 7,230 deaths this year.^{4,5}

Yet despite these statistics, physicians (including dermatologists and oncologists) note anecdotally that many of their patients were not familiar with CSCC until their diagnosis. Furthermore, common perceptions suggest a lack of understanding that CSCC, like melanoma, can progress to advanced stages and potentially become life-threatening – even among those who proactively protect themselves from skin cancer.⁶



Methodology Overview

To test this hypothesis and assess the level of awareness of CSCC among the general population, The Skin Cancer Foundation, in coordination with Regeneron and Sanofi, commissioned a nationwide survey on attitudes around and knowledge of skin cancers including CSCC, melanoma, and basal cell carcinoma (BCC), the most common type of skin cancer.

The survey was conducted online by The Harris Poll between May 2 – 22, 2019 among 2,010 adults ages 18 and older in the U.S. Raw data were weighted where necessary by age within gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, income, size of household, marital status, employment status, internet usage and propensity to be online to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.



Key Takeaways

The survey findings demonstrated a pervasive lack of awareness of CSCC and non-melanoma skin cancers among Americans, and revealed misconceptions about the potential for non-melanoma skin cancers to progress and become life-threatening. A summary of results follows.⁶

CSCC is not well known, especially compared to melanoma:

74% of Americans were not familiar with CSCC, including **42%** who had never even heard of it

*In contrast, only **42%** of Americans were not familiar with melanoma, including only **11%** who had never heard of it*

Only 3% of adults correctly identified CSCC as one of the three most common types of cancer in the U.S.¹ (The other two most common types are BCC – identified by **6%** of adults – and breast cancer – identified by **69%** of adults.)^{2,5}

*Among the **58%** of Americans who had heard of CSCC, only **4%** were able to identify it as one of the three most common types of cancer¹*

54% of Americans falsely believe that melanoma is the most common type of skin cancer in the U.S., although CSCC is five times more prevalent^{3,4}

***16%** of adults correctly identified BCC as the most common type of skin cancer⁵*

Misconceptions about advanced CSCC – including the danger – are widespread:

Only 18% of adults knew that CSCC can become advanced, including spreading to other parts of the body, compared to nearly twice the percentage who knew that about melanoma (**35%**)

72% of adults did not know that advanced CSCC can be life-threatening, vs. **42%** who did not know this about melanoma

82% of adults falsely believed, or were not sure if, advanced CSCC is only fatal when it spreads to other parts of the body (i.e., metastasized), even though **80%** of CSCC deaths are reported to be caused by locoregional disease that has not distantly metastasized^{7,8}

85% of respondents falsely believed that or were not sure if far fewer people die of CSCC than melanoma in the U.S. each year^{3,4}

Most adults at higher risk for CSCC are uninformed about it:

Men are three times as likely as women to get CSCC, but **74%** of men were unfamiliar with CSCC^{9,10}

People living in southern states are at greater risk for CSCC than those living in northern states, but **72%** of respondents living in southern states were unfamiliar with CSCC¹¹

Among people who work year-round jobs that keep them outside in the sun, **71%** were unfamiliar with CSCC⁹

People over 65 are more likely to be diagnosed with CSCC. While older respondents (ages 65+) were more familiar with CSCC than some of their younger peers, a large proportion of this population were still generally unaware of CSCC (**35%** vs. **26%** for the overall population)^{7,12}

A consciousness of sun safety and efforts to prevent skin cancer do not indicate a significantly greater awareness of CSCC:

Among adults who said they use sunscreen daily to prevent skin cancer, **61%** were unfamiliar with CSCC

Among respondents who said they have visited a dermatologist for regular skin cancer screenings, **52%** were unfamiliar with CSCC

Most adults who have had skin cancer are still uninformed about advanced CSCC and its potential treatment options:

Among adults who had been diagnosed with non-melanoma skin cancer (**8.7%** of all Americans), **72%** did not know that advanced CSCC can be life-threatening

Among the same group, awareness of commonly used treatments for advanced non-melanoma skin cancer was low: **10%** were aware of radiation, **7%** were aware of chemotherapy and **5%** were aware of immunotherapy¹³



Conclusion

The findings of the survey demonstrate that a concentrated and focused educational effort is required to improve overall awareness and understanding of CSCC, especially the potential for progression and seriousness of advanced disease. While awareness of melanoma has steadily improved, a persistent lack of knowledge about non-melanoma skin cancers remains.

The Skin Cancer Foundation is committed to educating the public about skin cancer, both through existing initiatives – including the mobile skin cancer education and screening program, *Destination: Healthy Skin* – and the consistent introduction of new programs aimed at improving education among the general public, especially those groups at greater risk of skin cancer.

**To learn more, please visit
our information page on CSCC at:**

<https://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/squamous-cell-carcinoma>

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