

Product labeling is important for sunscreen products

Product labels relay important information to consumers on what they are buying. Sunscreens should be no exception.

To date, there has not been a uniformly agreed upon method of measuring the effectiveness of sunscreens in protecting consumers against harmful ultraviolet-A (UVA) radiation, which has been linked to premature aging and skin cancer. This lack of clarity is reflected in the United States Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Sunscreen monograph, published in May 1999, that did not address this issue.

Speaking at the American Academy of Dermatology's Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month Press Conference, dermatologist Henry W. Lim, M.D., Chairman and Clarence S. Livingood Chair, Department of Dermatology, Henry Ford Health System discussed the recommendations of the AAD Consensus Conference on UVA Protection of Sunscreens.

The Consensus Conference was a one-day conference that brought together leaders in dermatology, industry, government agencies and the photobiology community with the goal of generating a consensus as to how UVA protection should be indicated on sunscreen labels and providing a recommendation to the FDA.

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radiation - which is the primary cause of sunburn and skin cancer. However, there is not a uniformly acceptable standardized method to measure a sunscreen's ability to provide protection from UVA rays. UVA has a longer wavelength than UVB, allowing it to penetrate deeper into the skin to cause damage to its elastic fibers.

"The goal of our recommendations is to establish standardized, biologically relevant and practical UVA sunscreen testing methods and provide labeling that consumers can understand," said Lim. "While we recommend that UVB protection - reflected by SPF - should still be the primary consideration for determining a sunscreen's potency, we must consider how UVA protection should be measured, and how it should be communicated to consumers in a manner that is simple and clear."

Available testing methods and labeling procedures were presented and considered by the

international conference participants. Based on the Consensus Conference, the AAD recommends that for a product to be considered "broad spectrum," it has to pass a rigorous set of tests done in the laboratory and using human subjects. SPF 15 or above is strongly recommended for sunscreens with "broad spectrum" claim.

In addition, the AAD recommends that an increase in the SPF of a sunscreen must be accompanied by a proportional increase in the UVA protection value. These "proportional" values should be determined jointly by the FDA and the industry.

"Three labeling methods were reviewed at the conference. The AAD recommends that pass/fail

labeling be used to communicate the UVA protection value of sunscreens to consumers," added Lim. "Therefore, sunscreens fulfilling the above criteria would be labeled simply as "broad spectrum." This would minimize confusion to the consumer. The specifics of the testing criteria would then be displayed in fine print on the back of the container."

The American Academy of Dermatology recommends using sunscreen as part of an overall sun protection plan that includes wearing protective clothing, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses, and limiting outdoor activities between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily when the sun's rays are the strongest.

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Madonna University offers class on the Net

This fall, Madonna University's College of Nursing and Health will offer an on-line course titled "Introduction to Entrepreneurship For Nurses." Fall classes begin the week of Sept. 6.

"This introductory course is designed to be a springboard for nurses who want to start their own business," said Kate Walters, course instructor. Participants will learn about other nurses in business and how they turned their ideas into successful endeavors.

The minimum hardware requirement for PC users is a Pentium processor with 64 MB RAM and at least a 6 GB hard drive. Macintosh users must have an OS 7.5.5 or better. Both configurations require Internet Explorer 4.0 or Netscape Navigator 4.0 with a 28 KB modem. Call (734) 432-5867.

Coral study for MS therapy

For people living with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis, the only treatment options available today involve regular injections with a needle. The landmark Coral Study will investigate whether a new medication could change that.

Wayne State University, the only comprehensive research center for MS in Michigan, is one of 57 sites in the United States.

The study's purpose is to assess the efficacy, safety and tolerability of an oral formulation of COPAXONE® (glatiramer acetate for injection) in people with relapsing-remitting MS.

Locally, the study is spearheaded by Dr. Omar Khan at the Wayne State University Health Center. He emphasized the significance of an oral MS medication in drawing into treatment many more MS patients.

"There are still thousands who are not interested in treatment because of the injections. Some people have needle phobia," he said.

The study will last 56 weeks; enrollment is expected to last at least six months. People with a confirmed diagnosis of relapsing-remitting MS who are interested in participating in the Coral Study should call the Wayne State University Multiple Sclerosis Center at (313) 745-4220. They may also call toll-free 1-877-31CORAL (312-0725) for a pre-screening.

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