

Melanoma — My Pet Peeve

This issue of *Cutis* is largely devoted to the diagnosis of malignant melanoma. There is one certain way to miss the diagnosis of melanoma, and that is to fail to examine the patient.

Most patients, and in far too many physicians' offices, all patients, fail to receive a thorough examination of the skin at a predetermined time interval. Even the cancer screening programs, which are most worthwhile, can be hasty and unyielding of obscure melanomas.

I would be the last person on earth to question the quality of a physician's physical examination, but how does one diagnose a malignant melanoma on the scalp, between the toes, or on the genitalia, in the "routine" physical?

Melanomas, even when seen, are easy to miss. In a busy dermatopathology laboratory, approximately 15% of biopsy-proven malignant melanomas were submitted, by trained dermatologists, with another diagnosis. The same statistic for non-dermatologists is a shocking 50%.

From my personal experience with busy offices and two very busy clinics, I have found that patients who are carefully and periodically examined (free of charge) for melanomas, and are taught self-examination as well as spouse and offspring examination, between physician examinations, are grateful, do return, and report to you all of their other skin problems. They also refer friends and relatives.

Read on. This issue of *Cutis* also contains advice on skin cancer from the American Cancer Society and the American Academy of Dermatology.

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