

# Hours Spent Driving Tied to Left-Side Skin Cancer

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WASHINGTON — People who spend more time behind the wheel may be at increased risk for skin cancer, particularly on the left side of the face, according to a poster presentation at an annual meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology.

Dr. Scott W. Fosko, professor and chairman of dermatology at St. Louis Univer-

sity, and his colleagues observed 898 patients (559 men and 339 women) with skin cancers on either the right or left side of the body; the average patient age was 68 years. In 53% of the patients, skin cancer occurred on the left side, and nearly two-thirds (63%) of these were in men.

The most common cancer in observed patients was basal cell carcinoma (608 lesions). Other types included squamous cell carcinomas (178 lesions), invasive (23) and noninvasive (42) melanomas,

and 64 additional miscellaneous cancers.

“What really jumped out in our data was a subtype of melanoma—melanoma in situ—in particular, lentigo maligna. ... Significantly, this was seen on the left side of the face,” Dr. Fosko said during a press briefing at the meeting.

Questionnaires evaluating the driving habits of dermatology patients from the university clinic were also collected. Patients answered questions about age, gender, hours in a car per week, number of

years driving, sunscreen use, and whether they drive with their windows open.

Men with left-sided cancers spent 3 hours more per week in a car than men with right-side cancers. In women, those with right-side cancers spent 1 hour more per week in a car than women with left-side cancers. Dr. Fosko cited data showing men as more likely to sit in the driver's seat than women, who spend more time in passenger seats.

He reported no conflicts of interest. ■

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