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Death by tan

Tumor specialist warns of dangers of overexposure to sun's rays

By Fiona Soltes
STAFF WRITER

It's hard to believe that the tan that makes someone look so healthy is the same tan that could be deadly.

Dr. Victor Vogel, who specializes in oncology, the study of tumors, at the University of Texas—M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, said skin cancer is something people should give serious thought to the next time they go out to get a tan.

"We need to go back to the idea that pale skin is beautiful," Vogel said. "Brown is deadly."

Vogel said certain types of skin cancer, caused by chronic exposure to the sun, can lead to death if not caught in an early stage. Squamouscell and basalcell cancers are slow-growing, allowing time for diagnosis and treatment. But malignant melanoma, or the black skin legion, should be treated as soon as possible, as it can spread throughout the body and lead to death.

"If detected early, these cancers are 100 percent curable," he said. "Everyone who is out in the sun should examine their own skin and have a physician look it over at least once a year."

He said the most common areas for the cancer to appear are on the face, neck and extremities.

Vogel said there are several warning signs. A change in a wart or mole is the most common sign, he said.

"If a mole grows larger, changes in color, or begins to bleed, this can be a sign of cancer," he said. "If the mole or wart has been present since birth, it's not necessarily a problem, unless it begins to change."

Vogel said to look for variegated moles, or those with many shades, including black, blue, gray, red or pink.

Other signs include open sores that will not heal; reddish, crusty patches; smooth, elevated growths with indentation in the middle; and yellow or white waxy scar-like areas where the skin appears shiny or taut.

Vogel said some people are more at risk than others. Fair-skinned people with freckles and people with red or blond hair, especially if they have blue eyes, are in a high-risk category.

"But all types of people ought to avoid sun whenever possible," he said. "If you get sunburned at an earlier age, in the late teens or early twenties, you are definitely more likely to get cancer at 40 or 50."

Vogel said most cancerous areas found in the early stages can be removed by a dermatology physician or plastic surgeon without leaving scars. Later stages of melanoma may need chemotherapy or radiation treatments.

Why worry about it now? According to a statement by the Texas Medical Association, 43 Texans died from skin cancer in 1987.

"Skin cancer is the second-fastest-growing type of cancer, following only lung cancer in women," Vogel said. "Fifteen or 20 years from now, there will be an epidemic of skin cancer."

Vogel attributes much of this growth to tanning salons, which intensify the amount of harmful rays on the skin.

Vogel suggests using sunscreens with high protection factors and covering up whenever possible. By using the chemical para-aminobenzoic acid, these sunscreens absorb the energy of skin-burning ultraviolet light.

Sun protection factor ratings represent an increase in the amount of time it takes to burn the skin, he said. An SPF of 15, for example, means a person can stay in the sun 15 times longer than usual without burning.

Consul charged with money-laundering

DALLAS (AP) — A 16-month federal investigation of money laundering and espionage has resulted in charges against the Yugoslavian Consul General as well as a chemist and janitor, both of whom are Texans, prosecutors said.

But many of the government's claims against the alleged ring, named in a 21-count federal indictment, are contradicted by court pleadings, agents' testimonies, transcripts and other evidence, the *Dallas Morning News* reported Sunday.

Announcing the indictment and December arrests, U.S. Customs Commissioner William von Rabb and other officials claimed Yugoslavian Consul General Bahrudin Bijedic, chemist Hubert F. Cole of Carrollton and Vjekoslav "V.J." Spanjol of Plano laundered money and smuggled defense goods abroad.

Prosecutors alleged the trio took secrets from trash cans of Dallas area defense contractors. All three are charged with money laundering and Cole and Spanjol were also accused of illegally shipping sophisticated scuba gear to Europe.

Cole has agreed to plead guilty and testify as a government witness, prosecutors said. But doctors examined Cole for mental illness less than two years before the investigation began and a Texas prosecutor de-

scribed him as a habitual liar.

"Here you have a case where a nut — Cole — was conning an undercover agent, the undercover agent was conning Cole, everybody was conning everybody and everybody apparently believed everybody," Denver McCarty, a Dallas lawyer representing Spanjol, told the newspaper.

Customs agents in Philadelphia responsible for the investigation have been ordered not to discuss their findings, said Paul A. Sarmoukakis, an assistant U.S. attorney.

Posing as Mafia financiers, customs agents in July 1987 began seeking money laundering contacts as part of their investigation. They said they were notified about Cole.

In one of his first meetings with agents, Cole revealed his money laundering "bible": a 1985 U.S. Senate subcommittee report describing successful money laundering prosecutions.

"They think this guy's a spy?" former Denton County prosecutor Len Levy, who handled a 1985 federal case against Cole, told the newspaper. "I've got news for them. I can imagine that anyone could talk to this guy more than five minutes and not realize he's not all there."

The 44-year-old Cole is a chemist with a doctorate from Rutgers University in New Jersey. He operated Dallas chemical company from the mid-1970s until the firm faltered in 1983.

Texas City, with a couple who dognapped him near an elementary school in Rendon over the Easter weekend.

Wolfson, who breeds Afghans, is skeptical of the information he has received so far, including the cancellation of a meeting to discuss details for Ebony's return.

"He's a very valuable dog, although he's not worth anything without his papers," Wolfson said. "He's black with a white star on his chest and he's 33 inches high—extremely big even for an Afghan. In fact, I've never heard of one that big before."

Ebony's odyssey began in mid-March when Wolfson arranged for a woman in Rendon to board the dog for a few weeks.

Possible kidnapping involves prize pet

GRAND PRAIRIE (AP) — The trip was meant to just give the dog's parents a little peace. But then the phone messages started.

Jack Wolfson of Grand Prairie is getting calls from someone he knows only as "Dave" and has been led to believe that his prize Afghan hound has been stolen and is possibly being held for ransom on the Texas coast.

"Frankly, I'm not sure what to think right now," Wolfson told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. But he posted a \$750 reward and contacted the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, which is investigating the matter.

Meanwhile the voice on the phone keeps telling him that Ebony — a two-year-old male Afghan that Wolfson says is worth \$5,000 — is living in Port Bolivar, near

World Health Day is an international observance of the importance of disease prevention and healthy living practices.

Dr. Barbara Douglas, professor of microbiology at A&M, said immunization for children is a grave problem.

Of the 360,000 children born each day, 25,500 won't celebrate their first birthdays, she said, because of health and education problems.

A goal set by the World Health Organization is to



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By Holly Beeson

REPORTER

In observance of Day Friday, Texas members with intern... discussed topics... nization for childho... uee problems and p... at a conference on ca... World Health Day... tional observance of... es that is recognize... April 7 in 166 coun... the United States. I... and international a... importance of disea... and healthy living pra... Dr. Barbara Dou... professor of microbio... sitology at A&M, said... mization for childh... a grave problem.

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