The Cancer Institute NSW is Australia's first statewide government cancer control agency. Established under the Cancer Institute (NSW) Act 2003, the Institute is responsible for lessening the impact of cancer by reducing cancer incidence, increasing cancer survival, improving quality of life for people living with cancer, and providing expert advice on cancer.

Skin cancer campaigns a life-saving investment

A study into the effectiveness of NSW skin cancer public education mass media campaigns has shown that for every dollar invested, the return is almost four-fold. More vitally, it is estimated that there were 13,174 fewer skin cancers and 112 deaths prevented from skin cancer campaigns that ran from 2006-2013.

By analysing campaigns that appeared in NSW from 2006-2013 and the savings derived from a reduction in both skin cancer cases and deaths, the authors of the paper, published in PLOS One, were able to show the saving to the health system, and in turn the taxpayer, by investing in skin cancer prevention campaigns.

The campaigns, Tattoo, Dark Side of Tanning and Wes Bonny, highlighted the risks of UV exposure through hard hitting ads and personal stories, while offering information on how to protect yourself.

“With the highest rates worldwide, skin cancer is our national cancer. We know 95-99 per cent of skin cancers are preventable through good sun protection. The challenge is changing attitudes and behaviours around sun safety,” said Professor David Currow, Chief Cancer Officer for NSW and CEO of the Cancer Institute NSW.

“The Cancer Institute NSW embarked on these campaigns to reduce the immense burden of this disease on the people of NSW and this study provides further evidence that investing in these public awareness campaigns is money well spent.”

A saving of $60.17 million was made in treatment and productivity costs, balanced against a total $15.63 million spent on campaigns to achieve a return of $3.85 for every dollar invested.

“We have seen a huge cultural shift in Australians’ attitudes towards sun exposure but it will take a sustained effort to end skin cancer as we know it,” continued Professor Currow. “We now have the evidence that as well as looking after the health and wellbeing of people in NSW, it is a wise financial decision to invest in skin cancer public education mass media campaigns.”

The Cancer Institute NSW released the state’s first NSW Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy to provide a framework for a coordinated comprehensive, community-wide approach to driving down skin cancer rates. Evaluation is now underway which will inform the development of the next NSW Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy for 2016-2020.

To learn more about Cancer Institute NSW Skin Cancer Prevention campaigns visit:

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