



The Maryland State Medical Society

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MEDCHI APPLAUDS DHMH REVIEW OF TANNING DEVICE REGULATIONS

BALTIMORE, July 27, 2012 – MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society applauds the statement released today that The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) is seeking public input on its regulations concerning the use of tanning devices by minors.

During the first 2012 General Assembly Session MedChi asked for legislation to prohibit the use of tanning devices by minors under the age of 18. It was unsuccessful. “Frankly, we stand by our position that children should not use tanning beds, but we appreciate the Administration’s desire to protect and educate children. We need a policy change to protect youth from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer” explained MedChi CEO Gene Ransom.

Millions of adolescents use indoor tanning facilities and nearly 25% of indoor tanning users are 13-19 years of age. The use of such tanning devices early in life is linked to an increased risk of the three most common skin cancers. A large study from the Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston revealed that when compared with nonusers of tanning beds, the risk for basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma increased by 15% for every four visits made to a tanning salon per year, and the risk for melanoma increased by 11% (10th International Conference on Frontiers in Cancer Prevention Research, Oct. 22-25th, 2011). A review of many studies estimates an overall 75% increased risk of developing melanoma associated with tanning bed use started before age 35.

Young women under 18 in the U.S. are the group which appears to be at highest risk. They feel that tanning is safe, and yet young white women are the group with the most rapid increase in melanoma incidence. According to a recent survey conducted by the American Academy of Dermatology, tanning bed users age 14-17 are more than twice as likely to think tanning beds are safer than the sun than older tanners age 18-22 years. Marcia S. Driscoll, MD, PharmD, President of the Maryland Dermatologic Society, states “It is critical, especially for our young people, that we dispel the myth that tanning provides a “healthy” glow. In reality, tanning results in injury to the skin, and the skin reacts by making more pigment (melanin). Repeated injury to the skin by tanning over time is clearly linked to skin cancer. Minors, who are less likely to be aware of these risks, need to be protected from the use of tanning devices.”

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. It is the largest physician organization in Maryland. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.