Surgeon general issues new warning about skin cancer

The spike in skin cancer cases is costing the United States more than $8 billion a year, the acting surgeon general said in a report last month.

Five million people are treated for skin cancers each year in the U.S., with 9,000 people dying annually of melanoma, the most dangerous kind.

One potentially frightening statistic comes from the Melanoma Research Foundation: Indoor tanning before age 30 increases the risk of melanoma by 75 percent.

As one method to reduce youth exposure, acting surgeon general Dr. Boris Lushniak called for colleges and universities to remove tanning beds from their recreational facilities, where many young students flock to the UV rays.

At the University of Missouri-Columbia, administrators saw the health risks in 2008 and decided to get rid of their campus tanning beds.

Christian Basi, spokesman for Mizzou, said a private company — Tan Time LLC — had leased space in the university’s recreation center for its business.

The lease would have been up for renewal in 2010, but in 2008 Mizzou tried to terminate the contract. The salon filed a breach of contract lawsuit. Eventually, the Missouri Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Mizzou, and the lease with Tan Time ended Dec. 31, 2010.

Basi said Mizzou wanted out of the contract because of “new public health information that had been distributed regarding tanning beds and the dangers they posed, including skin cancers.”

A tanning salon operates near the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, but it is privately owned.

On the salon’s website, the salon says it’s located “in the heart of U of I’s campus.”

Chris Harris, a spokesman for the university, said that various parts of the campus are surrounded by private businesses.

“I would characterize it as a pretty shaky misrepresentation,” Harris said. “We didn’t sell them anything, and we don’t have any control over the property.”
STATE SUPPORT
Illinois already bans minors from using tanning beds, and Missouri this year voted to restrict tanning by minors.

More than seven years ago, Dr. Lynn Cornelius, chief of dermatology at Washington University School of Medicine, began a crusade against the state’s lack of indoor tanning regulations.

Possibly most appalling to Cornelius was that Missouri did not require a guardian’s permission for minors to tan.

Last year, the Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics released a study that found 65 percent of 243 tanning facilities in Missouri would allow children as young as 10 or 12 years old to use tanning beds. Cornelius, lead author of the study, said the salons were randomly selected. Of the 243 surveyed, 43 percent said no risks were associated with indoor tanning.

In June, Gov. Jay Nixon signed the legislation that Cornelius spearheaded for so long: guardian permission is required for minors to tan.

She called this the first step to more regulation.

“As dermatologists, we would certainly like for no one to use tanning beds at all, regardless of age, because the scientific evidence is strong that it increases risk for all types of cancers,” she said.

Cornelius said she hopes the next step will be banning minors from using the beds at all.

West End Tan in Central West End allows no one under 16 to tan.

Owner Dennis Gorg called indoor tanning a personal choice but said it “affords the consumer a safer option than being directly in the sun as you control time, eye wear and skin exposure.”

He also claimed that indoor UV rays are known to be safer than direct sun exposure, although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says indoor tanning is not any safer than the sun because it includes an increased amount of UV exposure in a smaller amount of time, leading to sunburns.

NOT JUST THE BEDS
The surgeon general also warned against sun damage.

Of course, individuals are warned to wear a hat, cover up and slather on sunscreen, but Lushniak now calls for parks and other outdoor locations also to provide shady escapes.

Dr. Scott Fosko, a St. Louis University SLUCare dermatologist, said he believes the uptick in skin cancer has a lot to do with variations of ultraviolet damage.
Besides tanning bed exposure, Fosko said he deals with a lot of skin cancer patients who have outdoor careers, such as farmers and construction workers.

Outdoor athletes, such as surfers, skiers and baseball players, also have to worry about the dangers of the sun.

And sunbathing, revealing clothing, driving and outdoor social gatherings add to the mix.

“We really think the younger folks are just getting more exposure from a variety of ways,” he said.

Michael Hanlen, 68, has had six incidents of skin cancer on his scalp in the past 10 years. The south St. Louis County resident had almost every spot removed surgically.

Hanlen said he believes the cancer was caused by years at the pool as a child when he didn’t wear sunscreen all day.

“I used to start every summer with a real serious sunburn,” he said.

His advice?

“Wear sunscreen,” Hanlen said. “Be very mindful of your time in the sun.”

Scientists, enthusiasts prepare for 2017 total eclipse viewing in Central Missouri

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, August 13, 2014 at 10:43 am

Three years is not too early to plan for the upcoming total eclipse of the sun, local astronomy researchers and enthusiasts say.

The University of Missouri is hosting the American Astronomical Society’s planning workshop next week for the 2017 total solar eclipse, bringing scientists and amateur astronomers from around the country to plan ways to engage the public in the upcoming eclipse.
Angela Speck, professor of astrophysics and director of astronomy at MU, said next week’s workshop is one of more to come where interested parties will plan for the Aug. 21, 2017, total eclipse, the first total eclipse over the U.S. mainland since 1978.

The hope, Speck said, is that Columbia will be one of many go-to places for researchers and enthusiasts worldwide to travel to, as the city falls almost dead center in the narrow path of places that will reach “totality,” meaning complete coverage of the sun by the moon. The path stretches from Oregon to South Carolina, though the rest of the country will see a partial eclipse. In Missouri, the totality path goes from St. Joseph to Cape Girardeau.

Next week’s gathering will be a congregation of ideas on drawing people to Columbia and other possible hotspots for those interested in viewing the eclipse. Grand Teton National Park also falls within the totality path, which Speck said she is sure will draw a crowd. But there is a draw to Columbia as well, Speck argues. In the Mid-Missouri area, the eclipse will occur just around noon when the sun is highest and will be visible everywhere, weather pending.

Among the conversations on the docket for next week is how the American Astronomical Society and its researchers can connect with optometrists and ophthalmologists to address decades-old concerns about damage to the eyes from looking at the eclipse. Speck is a former society board member and is helping the group plan eclipse-related events.

“We believe everyone should be able to enjoy it and not be afraid of it,” Speck said. To help ease safety concerns, Speck and other national organizers plan to purchase millions of “eclipse glasses,” which have a thick lens that helps protect the eyes but still allows the viewer to see the spectacle. The glasses are cheap at 50 cents apiece, but Speck said she hopes they can rein in national sponsors, such as Eclipse gum or Corona beer — corona being a reference to the outer layer of the sun that will be visible during the two-minute eclipse.

Speck said planners want to contact local shops to talk about making eclipse-themed products, such as craft beers or ice cream, to help draw extra attention. The possible economic impact could be a big benefit for the area, Speck said.

Val Germann, past president of the Central Missouri Astronomical Association — an amateur astronomy group that operates the observatory at MU, said he has had the 2017 eclipse “marked on his calendar” for 20 years. The Mid-Missouri group has been printing eclipse T-shirts for 15 years, he said.

“We expect to be overwhelmed by the number of people,” he said, adding that he’s already aware of a group of 50 people from Italy coming in just for this event. “Twenty years ago there was an annular
eclipse almost on this same exact path and we had people from all over the country come for that. This will be even more spectacular."

Next week’s workshop is scheduled for Aug. 21 and 22 in the Physics Building, 701 S. College Ave.

Grow Well Missouri project strengthens food pantry services

August 13, 2014
BY Sarah Walsh

Grow Well Missouri, a University of Missouri-sponsored project, has been assisting food pantries by offering vegetable seed packets and gardening advice to pantry visitors.

The project belongs to the university’s Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security (ICFS) in the College of Agriculture and is funded through a grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health. Grow Well Missouri has partnered with four food pantries so far: Shelby County Food Pantry, St. James Caring Center, the Help Center in Mexico, Missouri, and the Central Pantry in Columbia.

Through their joint efforts, the initiative has already distributed almost 22,000 seed packets this year, according to project coordinator Bill McKelvey.

The program also intends to add two more pantries by 2015, and is working to create resources for the food pantries and the communities they serve as well.

More than 80 percent of the people given seeds have established a garden and 87 percent of those said they would continue with the gardening, according to a conducted survey. Additionally, almost 90 percent of surveyed gardeners have shared their surplus produce with friends, family and neighbors, and more than half of the gardeners keep their food frozen for the off-season months.
McKelvey said ICFS also plans to provide recipes that use the vegetables that visitors can grow, in addition to demonstrations on how to properly prepare and store the food. Gardening classes will also be available.

“Providing these skills is critical to helping clients achieve lasting self-sufficiency,” McKelvey said. “The Grow Well project is one of the most cost-efficient assistance programs, costing approximately $4 per person to provide clients with 20 different varieties of spring and summer vegetable seeds.”

Most food pantries cannot afford to provide clients with healthy options due to limited refrigeration. The canned and processed foods that patrons end up consuming leads to diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure.

Limited access to adequate foods, known as food insecurity, affects 17.6 million U.S. households, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Missouri itself is ranked seventh in the nation in food insecurity and has the fifth highest rate of child food insecurity in the country.

“The individuals who operate food pantries do great work and are very dedicated to serving their community,” McKelvey said. “Our hope is to help them by providing an opportunity to network with one another and to learn and share ideas. Ultimately, this will allow food pantries to identify and cultivate relationships both within and outside of their communities.”

Campuses Are the Best Places for Sexual Assault Accountability

By Holly Rider-Milkovich, who is the director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center at the University of Michigan.

AUGUST 12, 2014

NO MU MENTION

Put plainly, Title IX dictates that all colleges and universities use administrative student conduct processes to address sexual harassment and sexual violence committed by
students. That’s the law, and it is important to comply.

But there are important reasons beyond compliance with Title IX for schools to retain conduct processes — which include a thorough review of the information presented, an investigation and a determination of findings and sanctioning when required — instead of abdicating all sexual violence matters to the criminal justice system.

For one thing, the student conduct processes provide an additional tool for ensuring accountability of harmful student behavior and increasing campus safety.

Student conduct processes can address infractions that are not considered criminal activity but are nonetheless breaches of acceptable behavior. There are plenty of behaviors that survivors report that are offensive, discriminatory and damaging, even if they are not against the law. For example, *quid pro quo harassment* — which can take the form of oblique and direct demands for sexual activity — is usually not illegal, but nevertheless can have far-reaching negative consequences academically, socially and emotionally.

Additionally, survivors of sexual violence can seek accountability through student conduct processes when the criminal justice system is not available to them. Even when a student commits behavior that does, in fact, meet the definition of criminal activity, and the victim willingly participates in a police investigation, there often is not enough evidence presented for a prosecutor to file criminal charges. This outcome is especially common in situations where there are no witnesses to the activity, little or no physical evidence, or if the victim has only partial recall of the events — a description that fits many of the reports we receive from students.

The criminal justice system alone is simply not effective enough to keep young people safe. Pernicious victim-blaming attitudes and myths about “wanted” sexual assault still permeate our entire culture, not just our campuses.

Even in cases when a victim reports unwanted behavior, the detectives gather enough evidence to support his or her charges and a willing prosecutor tries the case in front of a judge who has knowledge and experience adjudicating sexual assaults — that is to say, even when the rare circumstances exist to create the greatest likelihood for a fair outcome at trial — there is a jury to contend with. Considering the myths in cultural attitudes toward sexual violence, it is no surprise that only 14 to 18 percent of sexual assaults prosecuted in criminal courts end in conviction. To be clear, that is 14 to 18 percent of the already small fraction of reported cases that are even charged.

For all of these reasons, in addition to our legal obligation under Title IX, colleges and universities must continue to hold offending students accountable for their actions and not rely solely on the criminal justice system to end sexual assault on college campuses.
How Campus Sexual Assaults Came To Command New Attention

by TOVIA SMITH
August 12, 2014 5:53 PM ET

NO MENTION

Call it a sign of the times that right along with required writing core courses, incoming freshmen at most schools this fall will also face a mandatory crash course on the subject of sexual assault.

At a Rutgers University orientation, for example, every freshman sits through a dramatization of the campus party scene that is as real as it is raw. In the performance, a character, Jess, winds up in fellow student Ryan's room, resisting his advances. Ryan persists and gets increasingly angry and aggressive. The scene ends with the Jess character wailing, and with students in the audience wide-eyed and stunned.

"We get some students who are shocked and are saying, 'Does this really happen?' 'Is this really what it really looks like?'" says Brady Root, Rutgers' sexual assault prevention coordinator. "We're talking about a small number people that are behaving this way, but they're doing it a lot."

Collecting more precise data on sexual assault is one of the new requirements schools are facing. Felicia McGinty, Rutgers' vice chancellor for student affairs, says the new focus on sexual assault brings a lot of new pressure, but she says framing it as a national problem also gives schools more cover as they confront it.

"The good thing about where we are now is that it gives us permission to have these conversations openly. It's not the dirty little thing that we don't talk about anymore," McGinty says.

'The Darkness Is Over'

Indeed, in just a few years, the issue has gone from mostly whispers all the way up to the White House, where President Obama has made cracking down on sexual assault a priority.

"It's like it came out of the closet," says Bernice Sandler, who's known as the godmother of Title IX. "The darkness is over."

Sandler has watched the legislation she pushed 40 years ago evolve from a club used first against discrimination in hiring and admissions, then in sports inequity and now sexual assault. (Click here for a list of the 74 colleges with pending Title IX sexual violence investigations as of Aug. 6, 2014.)
"That's the power of Title IX. It's a hammer that's there, and schools know this and are busy scrambling to change their policies, and that makes me smile," Sandler says.

A range of policies are being revamped — from what counts as rape to how schools handle investigations. The crackdown comes three years after the government fired its first warning shot at higher ed with a so-called "Dear Colleague" letter that put schools on notice that failing to handle sexual assault properly could cost them their federal funding. "That was a game changer. That was a tool that many of us used to show our universities like, 'Hey, you have to do this,'" says Annie Clark. She is one of several survivors-turned-activists who began to tell their stories publicly right around that time and to connect online.

"We could have Twitter conversations and use hashtag activism, and we could put [sample] complaints on Google docs, and it was a tipping point," she says.

But "we're not out of the bad old days" yet, as one federal official put it. Schools are still blaming victims and failing to punish perpetrators. Under new legislation, those kinds of schools would face new sanctions in addition to the so-called nuclear threat that Catherine Lhamon, the U.S. Education Department's assistant secretary for civil rights, recently warned schools she's not afraid to use.

"I will go to enforcement, and I am prepared to withhold federal funds," Lhamon said at a national conference at Dartmouth College last month. The school that was the inspiration for the movie Animal House and is one of dozens now under federal investigation had volunteered to host the so-called "summit on sexual assault."

"Sign of the times," acknowledged Dartmouth outgoing Dean Charlotte Johnson. But no school can afford to be daunted by the spotlight or the stakes. "Our sort-of tactic is to confront it head on," she says. "We want to make sure we get this right."

A Swinging Pendulum

It is an abrupt turn for many schools that have treated incidents of sexual assault as teachable moments and have resisted the idea that their valedictorians or star athletes could also be predators.

Gail Stern of Catharsis Productions, who runs sexual violence prevention programs for higher ed and the military, says there's something about colleges that has allowed the problem to quietly fester there longer than at other institutions.

"There is a real sense of 'this is our identity' — that they're the best, they're the smartest, they're the most virtuous. And what's so funny, I can't tell you how many times I've talked with an academic, and I've said, 'Oh, I do all this work with the military;' and they've said, 'Oh, the military. Well, they need it.' And I lose it! I'm like, 'You need it,'" she says.

Helping drive home the point: A growing number of alleged victims are winning civil suits against schools, and they are now more willing to sue. But on the other hand, so are the accused. Dozens of students who say they've been unfairly punished are now pushing back against what they say are kangaroo campus courts run amok.
"There is a certain hysteria in the air on this topic," says Anne Neal of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. She says schools are running so scared of violating the civil rights of alleged victims that they end up violating the due process rights of defendants instead.

"It's really a surreal situation, I think. The government has effectively put our universities in an untenable situation where they're damned if they do and they're damned if they don't," Neal says.

Advocates say the pushback is no surprise as the pendulum swings and sexual assault goes from being swept under the rug to being treated as a serious crime.

Back at Rutgers, the skit dramatizing a sexual assault has been cited by the White House as the kind of program all schools should have, to increase awareness about the issue.

Incoming freshman Skyler Bolkin says it got her attention. "It's infuriating because no one is safe. I know that sounds a little paranoid, but, I mean, there's always a chance, and you do have to make sure that everyone is safe, because that's what friends do," she says.

Advocates say training students to be more active observers and changing campus culture are as critical to reducing campus sexual assault as schools cracking down on perpetrators and the government cracking down on schools.

No Special Treatment

August 14, 2014

By
Jake New

NO MU MENTION

The National College Athletic Association made clear to its members last week that college athletics departments should not have an oversight role in investigating sexual assault allegations against athletes.
The NCAA's Executive Committee unanimously passed a resolution Friday that spelled out expectations for how athletics departments should handle cases of sexual assault.

"Athletic departments must cooperate with but not manage, direct, control or interfere with college or university investigations into allegations of sexual violence ensuring that investigations involving student-athletes and athletics department staff are managed in the same manner as all other students and staff on campus," the resolution stated.

A survey released in July by the office of U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat, found that 22 percent of a national sample of colleges reported that they had a policy or procedure that gives the athletics department oversight over sexual assault allegations made against athletes. About 20 percent of the nation's largest public institutions and 15 percent of the largest private institutions had such a policy, the survey found.

McCaskill called the finding "borderline outrageous" and confronted Mark Emmert, the NCAA's president, about the survey during a previously-scheduled Senate hearing on the same day as the report's release. Senator Kelly Ayotte, a New Hampshire Republican, added: “The athletic department is not where you handle these allegations, Dr. Emmert. You’ve got to walk out this door and fix that.”

Emmert promised to raise the issue with NCAA leaders and said that any such policies created “enormous” conflicts of interest.

“This is really inappropriate and we need to find ways to make sure that athletic departments are not the ones who are responsible for adjudication of these issues because of all of the obvious concerns that you raise,” he said.

The issue of the athletics department role extends beyond the results of the senator's survey. In some of the prominent cases in which women say that colleges have ignored or covered up sexual assaults, the alleged victims say that athletes whom they accused were protected by a range of college officials, including those in athletics departments. Friday's resolution also directs colleges and their athletics departments to comply with campus authorities; educate all college athletes, coaches and staff about sexual violence prevention and response; and assure compliance with all federal and applicable
state regulations related to sexual violence.

“The Executive Committee recognizes the importance of addressing the abhorrent societal issue of sexual violence, especially when it occurs on our campuses,” the resolution stated. “The Executive Committee acknowledges that it is our members’ collective responsibility to maintain campuses as safe places to learn, live, work and play.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New animal supply trailer brings relief to pet owners in natural disasters

Wednesday, August 13, 2014 | 8:47 p.m. CDT; updated 6:37 a.m. CDT, Thursday, August 14, 2014
BY MICHELLE TODD

COLUMBIA — A tornado has hit your house and you have to evacuate for the safety of yourself and your family. You have a pet dog you have had since he was a puppy, and no disaster shelter in the area can accommodate him.

You have a choice to make: your safety or your dog.

This is not an uncommon experience for those in the center of devastating storms. After the Joplin tornado in 2011, more than a thousand pets were left homeless, according to an article by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Katherine Vogelweid, an associate clinical professor at MU's College of Veterinary Medicine, went to Joplin after the tornado as a volunteer. She said that of the close to 1,300 animals separated from their families that came through the shelter in the following month, around 100 to 150 needed veterinary care.

A month after the tornado, the Joplin Humane Society hosted large adoption events for the many pets that had not been reunited with their owners, according to the FEMA article.
Now, Boone County residents will no longer have to make the heart-wrenching choice between getting to safety and saving their pets.

On Wednesday evening, a disaster relief supply trailer was introduced at Stephens Lake Park by AKC Reunite and the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals. The trailer is the first of its kind in Missouri, though AKC Reunite has a nationwide campaign, with trailers in other states.

The trailer contains supplies that can be set up quickly at shelters in the event of an emergency, Dziuk said. The responsibility of the management and maintenance of the trailer falls on Boone County.

Martina Pounds, fire captain at the Boone County Fire District, said the trailer is supposed to stay in Boone County. To send it out of the county for disasters in other parts of Missouri, the emergency teams for the other county would have to go through the Statewide Mutual Aid system.

Natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the 2011 tornado in Joplin have called attention to the lack of disaster relief plans that include pets, Eddie Dziuk, chief operating officer of the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals, said.

Dziuk said humane societies have not been able to handle the amount of animals displaced after disasters, while people have even been turned away from shelters because the shelter could not accommodate the pets they brought with them.

According to an article published in the American Veterinary Medical Association’s journal, obstacles to moving pets, such as lack of human shelters that allow pets, may delay evacuation and cause people to abandon their pets or even cause people to refuse to evacuate themselves. Failure to evacuate could not only put these people at risk, but also jeopardize the safety of the general public and rescue workers, according to the article.

"(After Katrina,) shelters were full and people were put in harms way trying to save their pets," Pounds said.

"I know that if I had to evacuate and decide what to take with me, my dog would be going with me," Dziuk said.
The trailer’s contents can provide for up to 65 animals, but only includes non-perishable items. These can be distributed to shelters to help house and care for animals. Ongoing efforts by volunteers will be required to make sure perishables such as food, water and medicine can be supplied throughout the course of the disaster, Dziuk said.

In the event where your animal gets loose and has to be picked up by a shelter, a microchip scanner is also included in the trailer in order to search for implanted identification. According to the Humane Society of the United States, microchips provide an extra layer of protection in case your pet loses its collar or tags, a very real concern during disasters. Tessa Johnson, grant administrator at AKC Reunite, said that the program has dispatched nine trailers total throughout the U.S., with plans to dispatch 10 more in the near future.

"You hope that you will never need it," Dziuk said, "but the knowledge that there are plans in place is heartwarming and gives a sense of relief."