

Survey estimates one fifth of melanomas undiagnosed during Covid-19 pandemic

- **Comparison with World Health Organization incidence rates suggest 1,713 early-stage melanomas were undiagnosed in Canada**
- **Lockdowns and pressure on healthcare systems result in one third of skin check appointments being missed**
- **Global Coalition for Melanoma Patient Advocacy launches innovative skin check Alexa & Google apps and instructional video to encourage self-examinations**

27th January, 2021 – A recent survey of over 700 dermatologists around the world has revealed the shocking impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the detection of melanoma skin cancer. Compared to a normal year of performing patient skin examinations, dermatologists estimate that one fifth (21%) of melanomas may have gone undiagnosed in 2020, with one third (33.6%) of appointments missed due to the pandemic.

When these figures are considered alongside the World Health Organization’s most recent melanoma incidence rates, the survey suggests that over 60,000 melanomas have gone undiagnosed worldwide, and 1,713 undiagnosed here in Canada.

“The lockdowns that have been necessary during the Covid crisis, coupled with the additional strain on healthcare systems, have led to a worrying proportion of professional skin checks being missed. So, with this trend set to continue until we all emerge from the pandemic, it has never been more important for people to check their own skin for melanoma,” said Mary Zawadzki – Patient Care Specialist, Certified Professional Cancer Coach B.A, SSW, RSSW Member of CAPO, Melanoma Network of Canada.

PRESS RELEASE

In response to the Covid pandemic, the Global Coalition for Melanoma Patient Advocacy – the alliance of melanoma-related charitable organisations behind the survey – has launched two skin self-exam tools:

1. **A voice-activated digital assistant ‘Skin Check’ app** – Available on both Amazon’s Alexa and the Google Assistant platforms, the app guides people through what to look for, and the seven steps for conducting a full-body skin exam. The assistant finished by offering to set a recurring monthly reminder for the exam. Once enabled, users can simply ask Alexa or Google: “Open Skin Check”
2. **A skin self-exam video** – Similar in scope to the app, the video covers the ABCD&E warning signs of melanoma, and the seven steps for checking the body. Pauses between the seven steps have been included in the film, so that the viewer can simply take their phone or tablet into a bathroom, hit play, and follow the instructions in real time.

To activate and use the app, people should go to <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08GLPWPX5/>, and the video is available at https://youtu.be/h_MBi70w26c

“In the fight against melanoma skin cancer, early detection and treatment is critical. Both the voice-activated app and the video are free to use, so we encourage everybody to find just 10 minutes each month and make conducting a skin self-exam part of their regular routine,” added Jane Axford, Marketing Director – Melanoma Network of Canada.

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About The Global Coalition for Melanoma Patient Advocacy

The Global Coalition for Melanoma Patient Advocacy was formed in 2014 by the Melanoma Research Foundation in response to the global need to bring the patient voice to the melanoma space.

The group has grown to include organizations from 27 different countries and is enthusiastically supported by its partners around the world, as well as the global patient, healthcare and pharmaceutical communities. The Coalition meets the vital needs of the worldwide melanoma community through three working groups, which each specialize in a unique area that addresses globally relevant issues for melanoma patients, encompassing:

- Melanoma Awareness and Patient Resources
- Patient Advocacy and Access to Treatment
- Collaboration and Recruitment

PRESS RELEASE

The Global Coalition for Melanoma Patient Advocacy meets annually and is determined to make the deadliest skin cancer curable through its worldwide partnership. For more information or with questions about the Global Coalition, email global@melanoma.org.

About the survey

The survey was conducted in November and December 2020, receiving a total of 734 responses from professional dermatologists across 36 countries. Dermatologists were asked to estimate the proportion of skin check appointments missed due to the pandemic, and estimate the proportion of undiagnosed melanomas compared to a normal year.