THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF DERMATOLOGISTS

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# FIGHTING MELANOMA WITH SMARTPHONES

Today, Dr Alexander Ngoo, will present on fighting melanoma with smartphones at the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) on the Gold Coast.

Melanoma Apps are new smartphone Apps that help users in primary or secondary prevention of skin cancer. There are many types of them, but they can be grouped into four different types:

1. Education Apps- provide information to consumers regarding melanoma or skin cancer primary prevention (UV, sun exposure prevention) or secondary prevention (skin self-examination)
2. Risk assessment Apps- assess individual patient risk factors for skin cancer to make them aware of their risks
3. Analysis of spots or moles either via a proprietary algorithm or forwarding of images to a dermatologist or clinician
4. Mole Map - Tracking or monitoring lesions over time with or without the aid of a body map.

Dr Ngoo says: "Our study 'Fighting Melanoma with Smartphones: A snapshot of where we are in 2017' is a register of all melanoma Apps currently available. It details the type of App they are, functionalities, teams involved in their development, costs to users, user ratings and impressions along with the degree of scientific research involved in the development of each App. It is the first of its kind to have also involved the use of all Apps in order to confirm their functionalities and advertised uses."

The key findings of the study are:

- The Melanoma App market is a high turnover one- almost half of Apps in 2014 no longer existed in 2017
- The evidence base of many of these Apps is improving however remains limited with the vast majority of Apps not peer reviewed or associated with clinician or scientific involvement in their development or review
- The costs of the Apps, especially those providing clinician consultations are significant and may be prohibitive for many users
- The most common function of melanoma Apps in 2017 is in aiding users to monitor and track their own moles over time.

Associate Professor Rosemary Nixon, from the Australasian College of Dermatologists says, "One reason for sunburning, is lack of awareness that it is UV, not heat, which burns the skin. This is especially relevant in cooler southern Australia. Thus a mild January day in Tasmania may be associated with high rates of sunburn, as the UV levels are very high at this time of the year. The solution is to access UV levels for locations all over Australia, through downloading a free App to you smartphone."

Dr Ngoo says: "We have found that the modern melanoma App market has been characterised by rapid turnover, but also ongoing detachment from a firm evidence base backing App efficacy. Additionally, there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of Apps which were involved in automated image analysis or diagnosis. It remains concerning that the majority of Apps surveyed continue to lack peer reviewed evidence to back their efficacy."

**ENDS**

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**Links to further information**

Annual Scientific Meeting website

A-Z of Skin

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**About the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD):**

The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

**Media enquiries:**

For more information, images, or to arrange an interview with a dermatologist, please contact:

Roshan Riddell
Marketing and Communications Specialist
Australasian College of Dermatologists
+61 2 8741 4150
roshan@dermcoll.edu.au