



December 14, 2005

The Honourable George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block
10th Floor, 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Smitherman:

On November 28, 2005 at a regular Board of Health meeting for Grey Bruce Health Unit, the Board considered the attached report from the Medical Officer of Health and passed the following Resolution 2005-118.

THAT, the Board of Health endorse the development of provincial tanning by-laws through the Ontario Sun Safety Working Group.

Yours truly,

Original signed by

Hazel Lynn, MD, FCFP, MHSc
Medical Officer of Health

HL/st

attachment

cc: The Hon D. McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
The Hon. J. Watson, Minister of Health Promotion
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Bill Murdoch, MPP Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound
John Tory, MPP Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey
Carol Mitchell, MPP Huron-Bruce
Jim Wilson, MPP Simcoe-Grey
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)
Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA)
Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI)
Dr. Loraine Marrett, Chair, Ontario Sun Safety Working Group
Member Municipalities
Ontario Boards of Health

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Medical Officer of Health

REPORT TO THE BOARD

Monday, November 28, 2005

TO TAN OR NOT TO TAN

Canadian Cancer Society: “No tan is a safe tan”

International Research on Cancer: Solar radiation-group I carcinogen causing skin cancer

Canadian Dermatology Association: “Sun tan is a sign of skin damage caused by radiation”

Tanning Salon: “Prevent cancer...tan with us”. Health Canada estimates that tanning is a \$1 billion/year business and is growing.

Basic Physiology

Tanning takes place in the epidermis or the top layer of our skin. About 5% of the cells in that layer are melanocytes. When these cells are exposed to short ultraviolet rays (UVB) they are stimulated to produce melanin which is the pigment that ultimately is responsible for the tan. The melanin travels through the other cells in the epidermis towards the surface. When these cells are exposed to long ultraviolet rays (UVA) the melanin oxidizes and darkens. This protects the cells from absorbing too much UV light. Most people have the about same number of melanocytes in their body but heredity will dictate how much melanin each cell can produce.

Vitamin D is essential for our wellbeing. It is produced in cells of the epidermis when those cells are exposed to UVB of wave lengths 280-315 nm only. Our bodies can ‘stock pile’ and save Vitamin D for about 3-4 months. In Grey Bruce there is enough of this specific form of radiation in sunshine for us to make Vitamin D for only about 4 months of the year. Most tanning beds used in the tanning industry do not have the type of UVB needed for Vitamin D production. Some machines may be able to provide those wavelengths necessary for Vitamin D synthesis.

Tanning units are considered radiation emitting devices and are regulated by Health Canada. These are primarily regulations regarding the amount of radiation that the device emits. Health Canada also gives recommendations regarding times and total exposures but there are no enforcement of those guidelines as that is a provincial jurisdiction.

Tanning and Skin Cancer (World Health Organization)

As with sun exposure, recent studies indicate a direct relationship between the use of sun beds and malignant melanoma as well as non-melanoma skin cancers such as squamous and basal cell carcinomas.

There is a widespread false belief that a tan acquired using a sun bed will offer good skin protection against sunburn for a holiday in a sunny location. In reality a tan acquired using a sun bed offers only limited protection against sunburn from solar UV. It is estimated that a sun bed tan offers the same protective effect as using a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of only 2-3.

As long as sun beds are available to the public, there is a need for education and legislation to reduce the risks associated with their use. World Health Organization (WHO) encourages governments to formulate and enforce effective laws governing the use of sun beds. In countries where voluntary industry codes of practice exist, the sun bed owners have generally not shown significant capacity to educate the public or self regulate effectively.

Grey Bruce Health Unit public health inspectors visit known tanning salons yearly to ensure that the disinfection practices are adequate. PHI's are not trained, nor do they have jurisdiction to ensure that radiation emitting devices are maintained and operated within Health Canada's guidelines. There is no required registry of tanning units. Many units are never inspected by anyone. It is a federally mandate that tanning operators cannot make health claims. However, this mandate is not enforced.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Board of Health endorse the development of provincial tanning bylaws through the Ontario Sun Safety Working Group. This organization is made up of reps from Public Health Units, Cancer Care Ontario, Environment Canada, Health Canada, MOHLTC, Canadian Cancer Society, University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine Dermatology division, and the Canadian Dermatology Association. This group has a credible, expert voice to make recommendations to the provincial government regarding these issues.

Hazel Lynn

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