

“Getting Burned” – Tampa Tribune, January 2006

Dear Mr. Loft

I read your article published January 23, 2006 entitled "Getting Burned." With all due respect, you did a great disservice to your readers by simply reporting as fact the information contained in the American Academy of Dermatology's (AAD) press release. The AAD release raises a very important issue. However, in recent years, a great deal has been learned about the many benefits of ultraviolet light and I submit that a respected newspaper such as yours owes it to its readers to tell both sides of the story.

For example, in the study on which you report, even the authors admit that they have not conducted a systematic review of the relevant literature. If they had done so, they would have learned that 18 of 22 previous studies conducted in the last twenty years on the relationship between UV light from tanning beds and melanoma show that there is **no link** between indoor tanning and the likelihood of developing melanoma. None.

You talk about the other risks from indoor tanning including "burns, infections, eye damage according to an independent report by the Federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta". You failed to mention that in its release, the AAD estimates that that there are 365,000,000 visits each year to tanning salons (one million per day on average according to the AAD) and there are 700 emergency room visits reported to the CDC due to injuries from tanning bed use. This is an astounding injury incidence rate of .0000019; and a safety record for which all industries should strive.

You also failed to report that over the past six weeks, there have been daily reports in the media about the importance of sun exposure and vitamin D in overall good health, especially the role of vitamin D in preventing cancer. In the past month, researchers at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Medical Center reported that vitamin D can dramatically lower the risk of developing common types of cancers. In fact, the report says getting the right amount of vitamin D can cut the chances of developing breast, ovarian, and even colon cancer from one-third to one-half. The UCSD researchers call for prompt public health action to increase intake of vitamin D₃ as an inexpensive tool for prevention of diseases that claim millions of lives each year. I believe that recent studies of this type are exposing the flaws in the Academy's message about the sun.

The fact is that after 25 years of a highly successful and well financed public relations campaign to scare us out of the sun, a significant number of Americans are suffering ill-health from that advice.

For your reference, I have included several articles that present a balanced perspective. I hope that next time you write on this subject, you include both sides of the story.

Sincerely,
John Overstreet
Executive Director
Indoor Tanning Association