



Cancer Society of New Zealand
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MEDIA RELEASE

24th April 2007

Solarium Scare Prompts New Zealand Study

Following news of a dramatic rise in solarium use in Australia, the Cancer Society of New Zealand has commissioned a nationwide study to investigate how this worrying trend is affecting New Zealanders.

New figures, announced in a recent issue of the *Australian New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, show an explosion in demand for solariums throughout Australia, with numbers increasing four-fold between 1996 and 2006. The Cancer Society has now asked researchers from Otago University to track the growth of solariums in New Zealand over the past fifteen years.

Some users wrongly assume solariums are a safer alternative to NZ's powerful sun, when in fact the UV radiation from solariums is five times stronger.

Health professionals throughout Australasia agree that urgent tighter controls are needed, as the solarium industry currently regulates itself under a voluntary code of practise that many feel is not working. Dr Judith Galtry, Skin Cancer Prevention Advisor for the Cancer Society, says:

“Skin cancer is New Zealand’s most common cancer, with between 45,000 – 75,000 new cases, and over 300 deaths, every year.

“We are particularly worried about the dangers to young New Zealanders, as international research now shows the risk of melanoma increases by a massive 75% if people use solariums before the age of 35.”

Galtry admits that getting young teens and adults to change their behaviour with regards to protecting themselves from UVR is a challenge.

A sting operation conducted last year by *Consumer* in New Zealand showed poor compliance with the voluntary code of practise agreed by the solarium industry, particularly in restricting access to those under 18 years old.

The Cancer Society, along with its Australian counterpartsⁱ, has recently updated its Position Statementⁱⁱ on Solarium use to encompass all of the recent findings. The organisation advises people to avoid artificial UV radiation, and recommends that the Government introduces tighter controls, including prohibiting the use of solariums by those under 18 years old.

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ⁱ Australasian College of Dermatologists, The Cancer Council of Australia and its affiliated member organisations.

ⁱⁱ To view the Cancer Society's updated position statement on Solarium use, please visit:
http://www.cancernz.org.nz/Uploads/CSNZ_PS_Solaria.pdf

Media Enquiries

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