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## Large increase in New Zealand sunbed services

New Zealand's indoor tanning services have been multiplying at the same time as evidence of their potential skin cancer risk has been mounting, according to University of Otago researchers.

The researchers have just published the first study looking at the number and variety of indoor tanning facilities and services in New Zealand, and changes over time.

Between 1992 and 2006, the study found a 241 per cent increase in the number of businesses advertising some form of indoor tanning service in the Yellow Pages telephone directories. During the same period, they found a 525 per cent increase in the number of wholesale providers to the industry.

The results of the study, carried out by researchers in the Cancer Society Social & Behavioural Research Unit at the University's Dunedin School of Medicine, appear in the latest issue of the Australian & New Zealand Journal of Public Health.

Dr Tony Reeder, Director of the Dunedin Unit, says there is growing evidence linking use of indoor cosmetic tanning equipment with an increased risk of skin cancer, and melanoma in particular.

"The substantial growth we found in indoor tanning facilities and services is likely to still underestimate the true size of the industry. Some services are offered without being advertised in the Yellow Pages, such as those at some hotels and motels," Dr Reeder says.

Co-investigator Janet Jopson says that there are good arguments for regulatory controls to strengthen existing voluntary guidelines for sun beds.

"Sunbeds can emit ultraviolet radiation as much as 36 times stronger than the summer midday sun. Recent research has indicated potential serious health risks from their use, especially for those less than 35 years of age and women. There has also been evidence of irresponsibility among some New Zealand industry providers," says Ms Jopson.

Victoria and South Australia have already introduced legislation while Queensland and Western Australia propose to follow suit before the end of the year, Ms Jopson says.

"Now is an ideal time for New Zealand authorities to collaborate with those drafting the Australian legislation," she says.

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