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Solarium users under 35 years of age showed a 98 per cent increased risk of skin cancer a major study has revealed.

Dr Louisa Gordon, a Scientist at the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR), said 21 studies investigating solarium use and increased risk of skin cancer clearly showed solarium use was dangerous.

“Australia has the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. QIMR has estimated the new number of cases of melanoma attributable to indoor tanning devices is in the range of 12-62 per year,” Dr Gordon said.

“We believe approximately 1,000 melanomas and up to 12,000 Squamous Cell Carcinomas (SCC) could be avoided in the next generation of young Australians if the Government instigated more stringent industry regulations.”

Not only is this a significant health risk, the research, commissioned by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) found stronger industry standards could save Medicare approximately \$300,000 per 100,000 people. The growth of the solarium industry in Australia has increased four-fold since 1992. Given the current burden imposed by skin cancer, future growth in the solarium industry will continue to inflate this human and economic cost in years to come.”

Dr Gordon’s research has also debunked the myth sunbeds were a safe alternative to outdoor tanning.

“All ultraviolet radiation causes damage at a cellular level. Solaria are a source of UVA and UVB and therefore it is likely to still contribute in the development of skin cancers,” she said.

Dr Gordon made the announcement during the official launch of the 2008 Suncorp SunWise Campaign which aims to promote prevention and the dangers of sun exposure during a 12 month state wide program.

QIMR relies heavily on community donations to continue its vital research into cancer and more than 30 other diseases and conditions.

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