

Sunscreen Classification in New Zealand

“Does having sunscreen classified as a cosmetic in New Zealand effect its reliability to prevent skin cancer?”

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Introduction

New Zealand (NZ) is now ranked world number one for the highest rates of skin cancer per capita (World Health Rankings, 2014). Sunscreen is one of the key preventative measures used to stop skin damage. However in NZ the effectiveness of sunscreen is limited by the classification as a cosmetic product (AS/NZS 2064, 2012).



Evidence

Application technique and UV filters are two of the many additional factors which also contribute to the reliability of a sunscreen (Cole, 2014). However, the classification of sunscreen influences whether or not it is regulated before it is sold and this varies between countries. NZ classifies sunscreen as a cosmetic meaning that even though there is a standard in place for manufactures to meet (AS/NZS 2604), it is only a guideline due to the lack of government enforcement (Sporer, Mathy, Kenealy, & Mathy, 2016). This means that any sunscreen sold here can either meet the NZ standard, another country's equivalent standard or no standard. Therefore, sunscreen sold in NZ may not meet their stated claims, maybe inconsistent and may predispose consumers to an increase unprotected UV exposure due to misleading claims offering more protection than in reality (Petersen & Wulf, 2014).

International comparison

This table shows what other countries regulations and standards are doing to protect their people (Pirota, 2015).

Country	Classification	Result
NZ	Cosmetic	Regulation AS/NZs 2604 is a guideline
AU	Therapeutic item	Regulated to AS/NZS 2604 standard
EU	Cosmetic with a therapeutic purpose	Regulation EC/1223/09 is a guideline. Labelling standards prohibit claims on sunscreen bottles without clinical evidence to back it up
USA	Over the Counter Drug	Regulated to the Sunscreen Innovation Act 2014. Labelling standards are strictly regulated.
ASEAN	Cosmetic	Regulated to the Cosmetic Directive of ASEAN. A mandatory warning over sun exposure must be placed on the bottle

Recommendations and conclusion

I believe the next step forward is to change the sunscreen classification in NZ from a cosmetic to a therapeutic product. This would result in:

- Upholding the standard AS/NZS 2604 to prevent inaccurate SPF ratings and misleading labelling
- Annual testing of sunscreen products and auditing labs to reduce overestimation and avoid deceptive products being sold.
- Additionally following in the footsteps of the ASEAN by adding a specific warning on the label of sunscreens to serve as a consent reminder to reduce UV exposure would be beneficial.

With skin cancer rates not declining, the NZ government needs to take action to reduce the burden on the NZ society. Introducing sunscreen regulations would be an effective way to start.

References

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Summary

Sharing knowledge with other health professionals is an essential way to keep up with the best practice available. It allows us to give our patients the most up to date information in order for them to make an informed decision (Zerwic, Grandfield, Kavanaugh, Graham & Mershon, 2010). Posters are known in the academic world to be a good visual medium for knowledge transfer as they provide a snap shot of a particular topic (Rowe & Ilac, 2011). A poster is versatile and can be placed anywhere. It allows new research to be brought forward to a wider audience who may not want to read a whole academic research article.

I chose to use a poster to share my findings around sunscreen for the above reasons, but also because a poster can catch the eye of readers with the use of colours and key words in the way that other platforms can't. Skin cancer is a hot topic as it is one of NZ's major health concerns of the 21st century. As a soon to be health professional, I want to know that the products I am promoting are reliable, but due to the classification of sunscreen this is harder to know than it should be. By sharing my literature review in a form of a poster, I am giving a brief overview of the governmental issues we have around sunscreen protection.

PECOT

I used the PECOT model to help narrow down my broad topic to a specific question (Jackson, 2010).

PECOT category	Information relating to question	Explanation
Population	New Zealand	New Zealand is a country with one of the highest prevalence for skin cancer.
Exposure Or Intervention	How sunscreen is labelled and tested	I am going to look at articles that talk about labelling requirements and the different levels of testing needed before sunscreen is placed on the market.
Control	Sunscreen internationally	I want to compare international standards to NZ and how the classification of sunscreen influences the regulations
Outcome	Knowing we can trust sunscreen and knowing it is protecting us against skin cancer.	Even though New Zealand doesn't have a regulated standard, I want to consider what recommended guidelines are in place and how this can influence sunscreens reliability to do its job.
Time	N/A	Time is not relevant in this literature review.

References

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