

---

# Skin Self-Examination

## Partner comfort and support during examinations as predictors of self-efficacy in patients at risk for melanoma recurrence

Julia DiMillo, PhD, Nathan C. Hall, PhD, Manish Khanna, MD, Christine Maheu, PhD, and Annett Körner, PhD

**BACKGROUND:** Skin self-examination (SSE) is an effective method for melanoma survivors to detect potential cancerous growths sooner.

**OBJECTIVES:** The purpose of this study was to examine whether the SSE self-efficacy of patients with melanoma and their partners is affected by their partners' comfort and support during skin examinations.

**METHODS:** 100 patient-partner dyads completed a 25-item sociodemographic questionnaire. Fifty-two partners attended an education session with the patient on skin examinations and the early detection of melanoma. All patients attended the education session.

**FINDINGS:** Having their partners attend the education session, as well as being supportive and comfortable with skin examinations, significantly predicted patients' self-efficacy with SSEs. In addition, male patients were found to be significantly more comfortable with partner-assisted skin examinations and reported feeling more supported by their partner than female patients.

### KEYWORDS

skin self-examination; melanoma; patient support; self-efficacy; caregiver support

### DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

10.1188/19.CJON.397-404

**ACCORDING TO THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION** ([WHO], n.d.), the incidence of melanoma is increasing, with 132,000 cases occurring globally each year. In addition, it is estimated that the continued reduction in ozone levels will lead to an additional 4,500 melanoma cases per year (WHO, n.d.). Although the prognosis for individuals diagnosed with early-stage melanoma is promising, melanoma survivors are as much as 25 times more likely than the general population to be diagnosed with a new primary melanoma or to experience a recurrence within the first five years of their diagnosis (American Cancer Society, 2019; Giles, Staples, McCredie, & Coates, 1995; Mujumdar et al., 2009). To prevent the detection of late-stage disease and the risk for increased mortality, it is essential that melanoma survivors detect recurrences at an earlier stage (Kasparian, McLoone, & Meiser, 2009).

### Background

Skin self-examination (SSE) is the careful examination of one's skin, including areas that are rarely exposed to the sun, for any variations in moles or skin spots (Kasparian et al., 2009; Robinson, Fisher, & Turrissi, 2002). Studies suggest that SSE is an effective method for melanoma survivors to detect subsequent melanomas at an earlier disease stage, therefore reducing the risk for developing advanced disease (Berwick, Begg, Fine, Roush, & Barnhill, 1996; Brady et al., 2000; Moore Dalal et al., 2008; Swetter, Pollitt, Johnson, Brooks, & Geller, 2012). According to Boone et al. (2009), melanomas that are found on the genitals, scalp, dorsal part of the thighs, or back often have worse prognoses. Because self-examination of these areas of the body can be difficult, having assistance from another individual is essential for effective examination of the entire body (Boone et al., 2009).

Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as an individual's perception of his or her ability to complete the necessary tasks to achieve a specific outcome. Self-efficacy has been found to be a direct predictor of human behaviors (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Gallagher, 2012) and is also associated with the adoption of healthier behaviors, the cessation of unhealthy behaviors, and the maintenance of positive behavioral changes. Research has examined the utility of self-efficacy-focused interventions for the treatment of