

Skin cancer: If you have skin, you're at risk

BY DAVID DRUDGE
STAFF WRITER

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States with more than one million new cases diagnosed each year. The most serious type of skin cancer is malignant melanoma. The disease will kill over 7,000 people this year and is the most common type of cancer among people under 30 years of age.

This disease threatens the majority of students attending UNLV. This isn't surprising considering the hazards of sun exposure are cumulative, and half of most people's lifetime sun exposure occurs by age 18.

This year, the number of melanoma cases is expected to reach about 34,000. One American an hour will die of the disease.

"Melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer because the cancer does not just grow on the surface of the skin," said Mandy Canales-Salazar, program director for the American Cancer Society. "It grows inwardly, attaching itself to other tissues and perhaps organs, thus spreading the cancer throughout the body."

Susan Kerdron, a UNLV



Take precautions against skin cancer—cover up.

PHOTO BY HYUN-HO HAN

freshman said, "I've always been a sun worshipper and never really thought about it being dangerous. Every summer I'm out there baking in the sun, and I love how it makes me feel. I don't think I'm going to change, but I don't really know too much about

skin cancer."

According to a recent survey by the American Academy of Dermatology, only 15 percent of people under 25 years of age know what melanoma is, and only one in five examine their skin for signs of cancer. The survey also found

that a substantial amount of people in this age group did not know the warning signs of melanoma or even if they were at risk.

The more prevalent causes of skin cancer are sun damage due to ultraviolet radiation, certain chemicals such as ar-

senic and coal tars in the petroleum industry, and cancers which begin in scars or sites of skin atrophy. At high risk are people with fair complexions, light-colored hair and eyes, unusual moles, a family history of melanoma, and those who intentionally go out and sunbathe or use tanning salons, said Canales-Salazar.

Boston University pre-med student Debbie Fine was looking forward to her sophomore year in college when she found out she had skin cancer. Debbie's younger sister remembers the day the cancer was diagnosed. "It was unbelievable," Stephanie Fine said. "Debbie looked and felt okay, yet after one visit to the dermatologist she was given only two months to live." At age 21, Debbie Fine died of malignant melanoma.

Fine was of those who are most at risk, as is her sister. "As children, we spent most of our summers in the sun without adequate protection," said Fine. "At that time, we didn't know how dangerous it was. Now we know more and can take precautions to help prevent this awful disease. I've also learned what signs to look for and how to keep a watchful

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Cross the street to Kaplan

Post-graduate tests made manageable

BY KRISTINE BREWER
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To take Kaplan, or not to take Kaplan, that is the question

Considering applications for the 1996-1997 school year are soon due, it's time to prepare for those graduate school entrance exams, which can be intimidating. Even the most confident student can become weak in the knees when thinking about the LSAT, MCAT, or GRE. But studying for one of these tests does not have to be overwhelming.

Preparation tools, including traditional books and modern CDROM programs, are sold at nearly every bookstore or software retailer. Prices for books are \$10 to \$25 and CD ROMS start at \$20 and go as high as \$70. These devices have practice tests and include tips on test-taking. Some students have had success using this method, however, using these items requires a high degree of discipline and follow-through.

Studying independently can be a problem, so a test preparation course might be

the solution. Though several companies offer such classes, Kaplan is the only one which does so locally.

Kaplan offers courses that are designed to teach test-taking techniques as well as enhance knowledge. The program offers preparation classes for the DAT for dental school and OAT for optometry, the MCAT for medical school, the GRE for general graduate studies, the GMAT for math and science, the LSAT for law school, and the NCLEX for licensure exams such as registered nursing.

Kaplan guarantees students will increase their test scores from an initial pre-test to when they take the actual test. This guarantee is contingent upon participation in the program, which includes attending class on a regular basis. Increases promised vary for each type of test, including six points on the LSAT, eight points on the MCAT and 220 on the GRE.

Quinn Black, a former Kaplan student, started with 150 on his pre-test and ended up with a score of 166 out of 180 on the LSAT. "I went from an average law school applicant to a serious contender."

But guarantees or no guarantees, the student must also apply himself, and not expect to simply pass by counting on Kaplan alone.

"The program should be used as a tool to help you study, not as a miracle solution," said Carlos Blumberg, a senior in



political science enrolled in the LSAT preparation class.

The first step down the Kaplan road is a pre-test, which Blumberg recommends students take advantage of even if they do not intend to sign up for the course. The pre-test is an actual full-length exam, and each section is scored separately in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. Using results, a customized program is designed to determine the focus of study.

If a student does not better his score, the course can be repeated one or more times depending on the test studied for.

Some students feel a major drawback to the Kaplan course is the cost, which averages \$800 per course. If money is a problem, students can apply for financial aid. Kaplan disburses funds based on financial need. Other students get

money from their parents or pay out their credit cards to pay for a preparation course.

Classes are taught weekly and students are provided with books and computer software for home study. Other resource materials are available for review on site during business hours, such as previous exams. Tutoring sessions and group workshops are held for those who want extra help.

Students can enroll at any time. Sessions are video taped for latecomers.

The center, at UNLV Gardens on 4632 S. Maryland Pkwy, is open Monday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m.

Though she likes the program in general, political science major Nicole Laudenslager found the hours restrictive.

"I would prefer to take the pre-tests at 8 in the morning to help train for the actual test, however the actual test is given at that time," said the LSAT preparatory class graduate.

Kaplan is a subsidiary of the *Washington Post* and operates more than 150 centers nationwide. Students who go home for the summer or winter break can use facilities in their home state at no additional charge.

Students like Blumberg and Laudenslager who have taken or are planning to take a post-graduate test suggest some formal course of study. They say preparatory entrance exam classes can build confidence and provide a positive atmosphere in which to learn.

For further information, call Kaplan at 798-5005.