

**Statement by Diane McElwain, RN, OCN, M.Ed,  
on behalf of the Pennsylvania Society of Oncology and Hematology  
before the  
House of Representatives Consumer Affairs Committee  
Regarding the Regulation of Tanning Facilities  
February 23, 2005**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Diane McElwain, spokesperson for the Pennsylvania Society of Oncology and Hematology (PSOH) on the issue of regulating tanning facilities. PSOH is the state association that represents physicians and health care professionals devoted to the improvement of oncologic and hematologic care of patients. I have been an oncology nurse for over 20 years. I take care of cancer patients at the York Cancer Center, part of the Wellspan Health System in York.

PSOH supports the regulation of tanning facilities, as there is significant evidence that exposure to ultraviolet light increases the risk of skin cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, skin cancer is the most common of all cancers, accounting for nearly half of all cancers in the United States. Each year, more than a million cases of non-melanoma skin cancer are found in this country. The fifth most common cancer among men and the seventh most common cancer among women, melanoma accounts for four percent of all skin cancer cases and 79 percent of skin cancer deaths. According to the National Cancer Institute, 40-50% of Americans will have a skin cancer at least once in their lifetime.

Studies indicate that tanning beds contribute to the development of melanoma. A Swedish study found that the risk of melanoma more than doubled for individuals who started using tanning lights when they were 35 or younger, and generally increased with more use of the lights until the individual had used the lights more than 250 times. The researchers found that using commercial lights also more than doubled the risk. It is clear that long term exposure to artificial sources of ultraviolet rays or to the sun's natural rays increases skin cancer rates. The studies linking skin cancer to exposure to ultraviolet rays have existed since 1894. Due to the aggressive marketing done by the indoor tanning industry many people believe that getting a "base tan" in a tanning bed will protect them from skin cancer. Experts say that the lights just act as a radiation multiplier, further increasing their skin cancer risk. According to the Swedish study, lights used in tanning beds give off mainly ultraviolet-A (UVA) radiation. The International Agency for Cancer Research (IARC) classified UVA as a probable human cancer-causing agent in 1992. The report on Carcinogens (9<sup>th</sup> Edition) describes indoor tanning as a known human carcinogen. Further more, the most susceptible victims are those under 30 and those who spend a regular amount of time darkening their skin by using either the sun or tanning beds.

Another artificial tanning study found that using artificial lamps as little as once a month can boost a person's risk of a deadly form of skin cancer by 55 percent. This study found that individuals who visited a tanning salon at least once were two and a half times more likely to later get squamous cell skin cancer and one and a half times more likely to develop basal cell skin cancer than those who didn't.

Over the last year, the indoor tanning industry has taken an aggressive stand claiming tanning is healthy and harmless, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. The wisdom of indoor tanning for cosmetic purposes has been repeatedly questioned by organized medicine.

Cancer is a deadly disease. It impacts patients physically, emotionally, and financially. The patient is also not the only one that suffers. The patient's entire family is impacted by the disease. I work with cancer patients everyday, and while we have successes, we have many heartbreaking cases. Skin cancer can also be devastating financially. Some examples of the cost involved in treating skin cancer are:

Soft tissue mass removal (surgeon's charge) - \$3,500

Sentinel node lymph node procedure (surgeon's charge) - \$2,000

Interferon costs and related office visits (oncologist's charge) - \$100,000

OR and facility charges are not included

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, physicians and medical groups around the world have undertaken extensive campaigns to reduce the excessive exposure to ultraviolet rays to reduce the current epidemic of skin cancer. Unfortunately, tanning indoors as well as outdoors is more popular than ever. Many studies suggest that young women are the most frequent users of tanning facilities. Regulation of the tanning industry at the state and national level is quite important, especially to prevent false health claims.

The FDA publishes a warning in the FDA Consumer magazine to consider indoor tanning as harmful as outdoor tanning. More than 1 million visit tanning salons on an average day. The FDA strongly discourages the use of tanning beds and sunlamps. There is no such thing as safe rays.

As reported in the Dermatology Times, at least 2 states, New Hampshire and California, have passed regulations prohibiting teenagers from patronizing tanning booths. The American Academy of Dermatology supports this regulation and is urging other states to pass similar regulations.

The research clearly indicates that ultraviolet light used in tanning beds increases the risk of skin cancer. Unfortunately, not everyone is aware of the risks. It is therefore imperative that tanning facilities be regulated to ensure that proper warnings are posted and safety precautions are in place. This will benefit the citizens of Pennsylvania, as well as the State government and society as a whole. Individuals visiting tanning salons will be able to make informed decisions regarding artificial tanning. In the long term, State government and society will benefit from, hopefully, fewer cases of skin cancer resulting in a reduction in health care costs.

Thank you for your time and attention. I will be happy to respond to any questions from members of the committee.