

Sydney Cancer Partners Conference Support: Conference Report

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Full Reference:

Skin checks in Australian general practice: The upfront and downstream patterns and costs.

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Conference/Meeting Name: Australasian Melanoma Conference

Location: Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Dates: 24-25 March 2023

Presentation Type: Invited oral presentation



Presenting on Day 1 of AMC.

Conference report

The Australasian Melanoma Conference was attended by approximately 350 clinicians, researchers and consumers, over two typically hot and humid Brisbane days. There were two plenary sessions and six concurrent sessions (20 sessions in total) covering epidemiology, clinical practice, pathology, basic science, and emerging treatments and technologies to detect and treat melanoma, and the lived experiences of skin cancer from inspiring consumers and advocates.

There were several presentations relating to the potential overdiagnosis of melanoma. New technologies mean melanoma can be more easily detected, but many of the early stage melanomas being treated might not have caused any issue for the patient if they were left alone. There were robust discussions between dermatologists (skin specialists) and pathologists around the interface between the two professions, all wanting to do the best by the patient but being aware of the potential subjectivity and other consequences in diagnosing melanoma in-situ versus a dysplastic skin lesion. A key learning is that pathology isn't always an exact science, and studies showed inter-rater and even intra-rater reliability/reproducibility can be an issue.

My presentation was part of a session co-chaired by Prof David Whiteman from QIMR Berghofer in Brisbane. I have been on working groups with Prof Whiteman for a number of years but this was the first time we have met in person. Prof Anne Cust from the University of Sydney also chaired the session, leading a 25-minute presenter panel discussion on melanoma burden, control and policy after the five presentations. The co-chairs had planned a few open questions to avoid any awkward silences, but the audience questions easily filled the time. Potential overdiagnosis, de-escalating treatment, and the difficulty in reducing the economic burden of melanoma were all discussed. Primary prevention through sun protection was noted as remaining potentially the most cost-effective use of the Australian health budget.

There was a highly entertaining plenary session about neoadjuvant immunotherapy for later-stage melanoma patients, and the tremendous advances in survival for certain patient groups. The session was delivered by a medical oncologist, Prof Georgina Long, a pathologist, Prof Richard Scolyer, and a surgeon, Prof Alexander van Akkooi. The three spoke together in a constructive and educational session that had more over-the-top acting and audience laughter than most conference sessions.

The conference wrapped up with a consumer session, envisioning what the future might look like in melanoma prevention, diagnosis and treatment, with the involvement of genetics-based risk stratification and treatment, and the importance of supportive care for people with cancer.

It was the first time I have given an invited presentation, and my first participation in a panel discussion session, both of which were a highlight for me. As was the afternoon ice cream on each day! It was great to learn so much from so many experts, to hear such robust discussion about current practice, and to see the constructive and patient-centred approach from those involved. The learnings from the conference, and potentially some new collaborations, will be useful for me in my future work relating to the costs of melanoma care, and cancer care in general.