

Worldwide, 160 177 people were diagnosed with cutaneous malignant melanoma (CMM) in 2002. According to WHO, the incidence of CMM is increasing faster than any other cancer. Recent epidemiological studies show that this pattern is fading out in some regions, and that the incidence is even falling in some countries. Norway together with the rest of Scandinavia and Northern America are countries where this change is most evident. Still, in Norway, CMM is one of the most frequent cancers in young people. Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the main environmental risk factor for developing CMM, but genetic susceptibility also plays an important role. The effect of sunscreens and the risk of sun bed use are debated. More research on these topics are needed. Early recognition of melanoma is of prime importance for improving the survival rate. It is documented, that public education, as a preventive measure, in respect of sun exposure habits and recognition of changing nevi can decrease the incidence of CMM.