

Ethnic Skin Cancer

Wednesday, May 21

In tonight's Medical Watch -- disease knows no prejudice. Skin cancer and African Americans ... when faced with the diagnosis most say they had no idea they were at risk. And in this case doctors say what they didn't know can kill them.

He sang about the sun but never warned of the possible danger. Bob Marley died knowing the threat.

Dr. Jackson: "Bob Marley died of melanoma."

Charles May, skin cancer survivor: "I related it to very fair people or white people I didn't relate it to myself."

But after a persistent pimple turned out to be basal cell skin cancer, Charles May knew *he* was a target ... yet he never took cover.

Charles May/Skin Cancer Survivor: "One of the fellows who used to play golf with us, he was dark skinned and he used to joke that he didn't need sunblock."

For years Charles played golf in the scorching sun in Arizona and California and it finally took its toll.

Dr. Brooke Jackson, dermatologist: "What we do see in people who've got brown skin is exactly that delayed diagnosis and poor prognosis. And particularly with squamous cell and melanoma you could die from those diseases."

Charles was fortunate, his cancer had not spread but on this routine check his dermatologist, Dr Brooke Jackson, did find two troubling spots on the scalp.

"Anything which is not healing which looks funny should be evaluated."

And given his history with skin cancer ... some added advice for the golf game this season.

"You have your hat and sunscreen? Charles May: "I have my hat and sunscreen."

Black, white, Latino ... lather up the ears and the nose and the back of the neck.

"Anybody is susceptible for skin cancer regardless of color."

Skin cancers can spread very quickly. If any spot is growing or changing or looks irregular in shape or color ... do not ignore it. What seems like a cut or even acne ... if it doesn't heal within a month get that checked out as well. Early diagnosis is the key to survival and covering up is the key for protection.

Dr. Brooke Jackson

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