

Skin Cancer Awareness Among Liver Transplant Recipients In Ireland – An Answer To A Burning Question

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Introduction

Liver transplant recipients (LTRs) are a high-risk group for developing cutaneous malignancy secondary to immunosuppression.¹ However studies suggest that patients have suboptimal awareness of the risk and are poorly compliant with sun protection.²

We aimed to evaluate the sun protection practices of Irish LTRs and their awareness of the risk of cutaneous malignancy

Methods

Single centre cross-sectional study of all LTRs attending hepatology clinics in a large tertiary hospital. 63 patients were telephoned and questioned regarding their frequency and method of photoprotection and knowledge of skin cancer risk following transplant. Secondary outcomes related to adherence to national malignancy screening programmes including cervical, breast and bowel screening.

Results

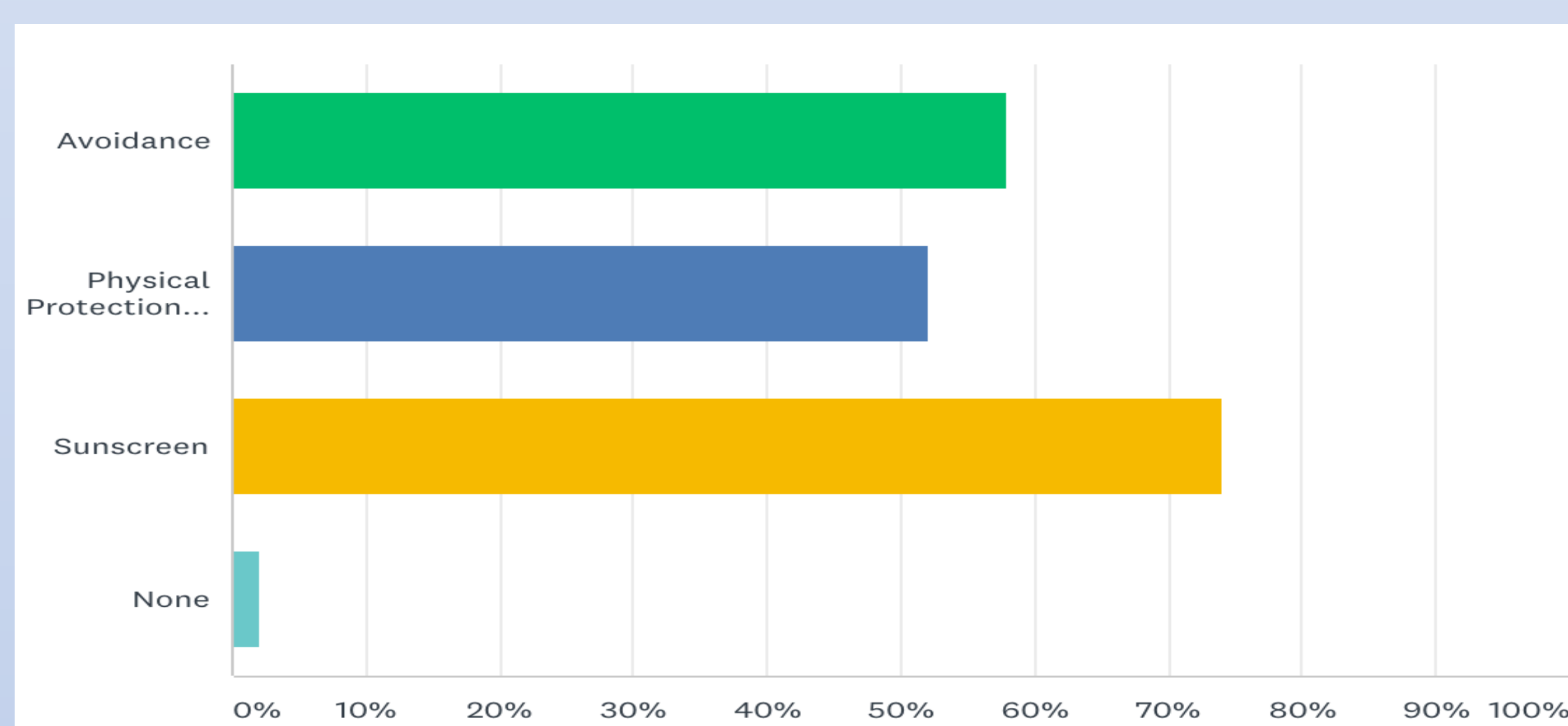
Demographics:

50 patients responded to our survey (79% response rate). 64% (32) male and 36% (18) female respondents. 64% (32) of respondents were over 55 years old (age range 20 – 79 years), and the average time from transplant was 7.22 years with the mean age at transplant 48.6 years.



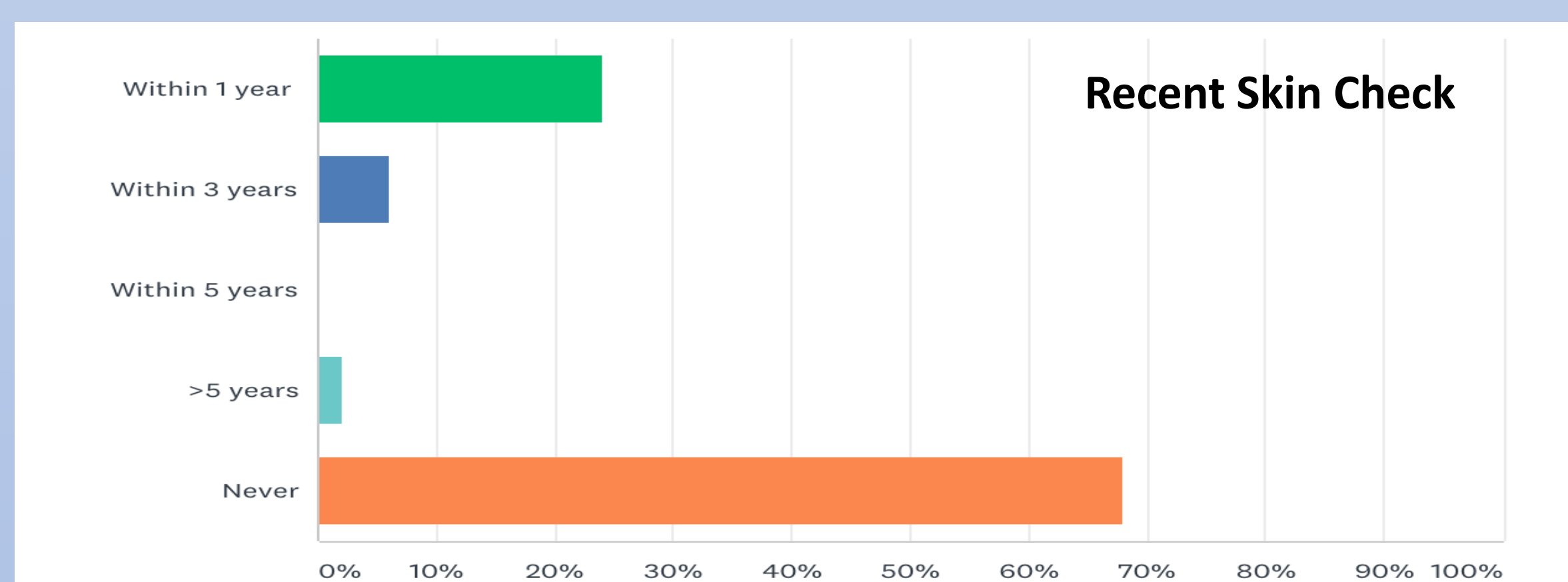
Photoprotection Practices:

Different methods of photoprotection were reported with 74% (37) using sunscreen, 58% (29) sun avoidance and 52% (26) using physical protection. 66% (33) use sunscreen on sunny days with daily application in only 16% (8).



Awareness of Risk:

86% (43) of our LTRs are aware of their increased risk of cutaneous malignancy however 68% (34) have never undergone a skin check.



Secondary outcomes:

General malignancy screening showed 76.9% (10) of women were up-to-date with cervical screening, 87% (7) availed of mammograms and 82% (23) were bowel screening compliant.

Conclusions

Immunosuppressed LTRs are a high-risk group for developing skin cancer but despite awareness of this risk, photoprotection and sunscreen use amongst Irish LTRs is substandard. It is vital to promote education and increase specialist dermatology clinics to ensure adequate protection for this vulnerable group.

References

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2. Haney M, Ordin Y, Arkan G. Skin Cancer-Sun Knowledge and Sun Protection Behaviors of Liver Transplant Recipients in Turkey. Journal of Cancer Education. 2017;34(1):137-144.

