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**Media Contacts:**

Serena Espinosa, (510) 608-5160 / [serena.espinosa@nccc.org](mailto:serena.espinosa@nccc.org)

Jim Zelinski/Zelinski Public Relations, (925) 242-0918 or (415) 420-6050 / [jimz@zelinskipublicrelations.com](mailto:jimz@zelinskipublicrelations.com)

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CANCER CENTER REPORTS RAPID INCREASE IN  
MELANOMA RATES NATIONALLY**

NCCC and other institutions look at 300 million person years of data to determine rate trends

FREMONT, CA (February 4, 2009) – A Northern California Cancer Center study recently revealed quickly growing rates of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, across the United States and in all socioeconomic groups in the past decade. Using data collected on all cancer cases among non-Hispanic white persons included in the Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) national cancer monitoring program, NCCC Research Scientist Tina Clarke, Ph.D. and colleagues analyzed rates of melanoma according to tumor thickness, age, and gender, and across all levels of social class. Dr. Clarke collaborated with scientists from Stanford University, the University of Southern California/Keck School of Medicine and Washington University School of Medicine.

The results of the study were published in the January 8, 2009 edition of the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* and estimated an overall increase in melanoma occurrence at the rate of 3.1% per year. Non-Hispanic white men who were over the age of 65 had the highest increases in rates of melanoma, going up nearly 5% per year, implying a doubling of incidence over a 20-year period.

Dr. Clarke also recently appeared on World Health News Today ([www.whnewstv.com](http://www.whnewstv.com)), a daily broadcast, to expand on the results of the study.

While some prior studies have suggested that increasing melanoma cases are merely due to more screening taking place, this study provided hard evidence that rates of early-detected thin tumors as well as late-detected thick tumors are going up in all age, sex, and socioeconomic groups studied. Dr. Clarke also noted that the increase in rates among those in low socioeconomic populations who might not receive screening is evidence of a true increase in occurrence.

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“Because we were able to break out and also to detect increases in melanoma occurrence both for thick melanomas and for persons living in impoverished areas, we can rule out this idea that melanoma is just going up because of more screening among persons with good access to screening,” said Dr. Clarke. “Now we can focus on making sure all patients know about melanoma and have improved access to screening, which can catch melanomas before they become deadly.”

According to the National Cancer Institute, people can reduce their risk of developing melanoma by doing the following things:

- Avoiding exposure to midday sun (10am-4pm), whenever possible
- Wearing protective clothing in the sun (long sleeves, pants, hats)
- Protecting yourself from UV radiation
- Using lotion, cream or gel that contains sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher
- Wearing sunglasses that have UV-absorbing lenses

**About the Northern California Cancer Center:**

The Northern California Cancer Center ([www.nccc.org](http://www.nccc.org)) is a nationally recognized leader in researching the causes of cancer and improving the prevention and detection of cancer. Its community programs improve the quality of life for individuals living with cancer. As an independent 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization with a \$14 million operating budget, the Northern California Cancer Center researches who gets cancer and why and has been working with scientists, educators, patients, clinicians, and community leaders since 1974.

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