

## **FOOT MELANOMA SURVIVAL RATE IS JUST 1 IN 2**

Malignant melanoma is increasing faster than any other cancer, and recent studies indicate the overall five-year survival rate for melanoma of the foot and ankle is significantly lower than for melanomas found on other areas of the body.

In the United States, some 40,000 new cases of cutaneous malignant melanoma (melanoma of the skin) are diagnosed every year and the disease accounts for up to 10,000 deaths annually. Melanoma is the most common foot malignancy and is more likely to be misdiagnosed than a melanoma located elsewhere. Studies show that the overall five-year survival rate was 52 percent for patients with a primary melanoma of the foot or ankle compared to 84 percent for patients with melanoma on the thigh or calf.

A malignant melanoma on the foot, especially if it isn't painful and on the bottom of the foot, won't be as readily noticed as a lesion on the face or arm. Foot melanomas, therefore, are more advanced and more dangerous when they are diagnosed and treated.

Melanomas can be found anywhere on the foot, including under a toenail. They most often appear as pigmented lesions. Risk factors may be similar to other skin cancers, such as excessive unprotected sun exposure, family history of skin cancer, numerous moles on the body and having fair skin, blue eyes or red hair. Further, populations normally at low risk for skin cancer, such as blacks, Hispanics and Asians, also can develop melanomas on their feet.

We advise patients to be highly suspicious whenever a pigmented or unusual lesion on the foot is noticed. To be safe, anyone with moles on their feet should watch them carefully and have them removed and biopsied by a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon if they change in color and shape.

Biopsies are done in our office using a simple local anesthesia. The procedures are generally painless and heal very rapidly.

Dr. Jonathan Moore DPM, MS