

Clifton study first to look at skin cancer rates in farmers

Griffith medical student, Keegan Hunter, who has spent this summer on a scholarship program with Clifton Community Health Services looking into the rates of skin cancers among Clifton residents, has found some interesting results especially among the farming population.

Mr Hunter reviewed all of the skin cancers found at the Clifton practice over the last ten years.

He found more than 700 confirmed cases of skin cancer including 40 cases of the more deadly malignant melanoma.

Around half of all the skin cancers were diagnosed in farm workers.

This is the first time the actual rate of skin cancer among farmers has been studied.

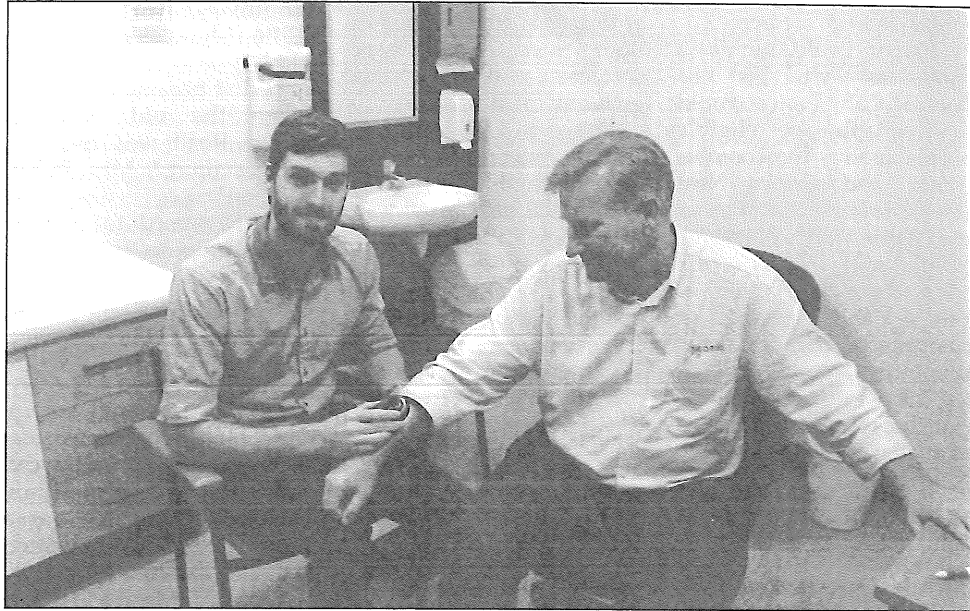
Mr Hunter believes that these figures may show that Clifton has a higher proportion of people with skin cancer than the Australian average of 2 per cent developing skin cancer every year.

"A higher rate of skin cancer in the local population could be due to the region's rural workforce with its higher level of sun exposure," Mr Hunter said.

"Because of these factors, people need to have a greater awareness of sun protection and early detection."

Mr Hunter is undertaking his scholarship under the supervision of Clifton Health Service Senior Clinician, Professor Scott Kitchener.

The program is provided by the Griffith Rural Clinical



Griffith medical school student, Keegan Hunter, with Clifton Community Health Service Senior Clinician, Professor Scott Kitchener.

School in collaboration with the University of Southern Queensland's Institute of Agriculture and The Environment.

Prof. Kitchener said that both he and Dr Franco Rodriguez-Letters have treated many skin cancers at Clifton.

Both men have done additional specialty courses in the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancer so that most cases can be treated locally.

"We have referred only a very small percentage of

patients elsewhere with the vast majority of cases being diagnosed and treated here," Prof. Kitchener said.

"The earlier people come to see us and their skin cancers found, the sooner we can treat them and the better the results are.

"Early detection is the key".

Dr Rodriguez-Letters reminded that younger children, even those less than seven years old must be careful to avoid sunburn to avoid later skin

cancer.

Both professionals agreed that the new medical centre facilities at Clifton have made skin cancer diagnoses and treatment even easier locally.

Dr Rodriguez-Letters and Prof. Kitchener are operating most days conducting surgery for skin cancer in Clifton in the new treatment rooms available at the medical centre.

Appointments are available from the reception upon request for skin cancer checks.