



How a Haircut Could Save Your Life

Deborah Sarnoff, MD is a dermatologist and Senior Vice President of The Skin Cancer Foundation. She has examined thousands and thousands of patients head-to-toe for skin cancer. She is a Mohs surgeon and operates on over a thousand patients every year. If there is someone out there that knows skin cancer, it would be her. One day at the hair salon she was having her hair washed and her stylists asked her if she knew there was a black spot on her scalp. She had no idea. After taking a photo of the spot from her iPhone, because it was impossible for her to see due to the location on her scalp, she rushed to have it biopsied.

She contemplated the irony of the situation. She is a skin cancer expert and has drilled patients, friends and family members about the importance of having their skin check every year. Yet she had failed to have her own scalp examined. She waited for the biopsy results with nervous tension. She was able to sigh a big sigh of relief when the results came back benign. It was nothing more than a blue nevus, a totally benign lesion that mimics the appearance of melanoma. She did take this as an opportunity to make it known how a haircut can save your life. Scalp melanoma is the deadliest form of all melanomas. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, one reason may be because of the delay in diagnosis because of their location. They can be hard to detect on the scalp and can be hidden by the hair. The biology of the melanoma itself or the environment of the scalp may also play a role. The scalp is well vascularized with numerous blood vessels, and the lymphatic drainage is varied and complex. It may be that melanoma in this location can easily spread to the brain, making it more aggressive. Melanoma of the scalp can also easily spread to the brain, making it much more aggressive.

With that said, it is important to ask your hairdresser to fully examine your scalp each time you go in to get your hair cut. Make sure to ask them to tell you if they find any lesion, spot, bump, or funny-looking mole. If your hairdresser does find something suspicious get it checked out by your dermatologist as soon as possible. It could save your life. If you've found something suspicious or you would like to come in to have a full-body skin exam, give our office a call today at **574-522-0265** to schedule an appointment today.

Source:

Sarnoff, MD, D. (n.d.). A Haircut Could Save Your Life. Retrieved May 13, 2015, from <http://www.skincancer.org/true-stories/haircut>

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