



MEDIA RELEASE

11 SEPTEMBER 2009

Victorians urged to “Ban the Tan this summer” with the Clare Oliver Challenge

Sunday 13 September, 2009 marks two years since 26 year old anti-solarium campaigner, Clare Oliver, died from melanoma.

To celebrate her legacy, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre will launch the “*Clare Oliver Challenge: Ban the Tan this summer!*”, an online campaign to raise awareness and funds for research into prevention, earlier detection, and better treatments for this often fatal disease, the most common cancer in the 15-44 age-group in Australia.

Clare’s oncologist and melanoma researcher Associate Professor Grant McArthur said that the Clare Oliver Challenge would carry on Clare’s message to be UV aware and help change cultural attitudes towards tanning in Australia.

“There is no such thing as tanning safely,” Assoc Professor McArthur said. “UV rays penetrate deep into the skin, and cause tanning by damaging DNA that leads to melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer.

“Skin cancer is the most preventable of cancers, yet every year 1,500 Australians die from it. By taking up the Clare Oliver Challenge, you will reduce your own risk of developing skin cancer, along with the other affects of excessive sun exposure, such as premature ageing”, said Associate Professor McArthur.

23 year-old melanoma patient Brendan Robbins is experiencing first-hand the feeling of regret in succumbing to the pressure of having a tan when he was younger.

“I heard the SunSmart messages, but I felt invincible,” he said.

“Getting skin cancer was never going to happen to me, especially at my age. But it has. Now I’m facing a very uncertain future ... I will do whatever I can to encourage other young people to be aware of the dangers of sunburn and tanning,” said Mr Robbins.

People can sign-up to the Clare Oliver Challenge at www.clareoliver.org and commit to a pledge that from 21 December 2009 to 31 January 2010 they will:

- Avoid sunburn and deliberate tanning activities, such as sun-baking or solariums
- Actively protect their skin in the five SunSmart ways – Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, Slide; and,
- Seek sponsorship from family and friends to fulfil their pledge and support melanoma research.

Before she died, Clare famously challenged the culture that a tan equals good health, and said, “I choose life, I choose to be fair”. Her message was simple – no tan is worth dying for.

MEDIA CONTACTS

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INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES BY ARRANGEMENT

Associate Professor Grant McArthur (Clare Oliver's oncologist)
Head Medical Oncology Skin and Melanoma Service
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Clare Oliver Challenge Ambassadors – melanoma patients and survivors who have taken up the Challenge – **see profiles below.**

1. **Chadstone, Melbourne: 23 year-old** Brendan Robbins had a birthmark on his right temple that had changed colour. He had it checked at a skin clinic after being pestered by his girlfriend. Weeks from having it removed, a lump appeared above his ear and he was told the melanoma had spread. Brendan says the most challenging aspect of a melanoma diagnosis is dealing with thoughts that he was facing his own mortality as a result of his own actions. Brendan is continuing treatment at Peter Mac.
2. **Brisbane: 31 year-old** former Australian and AIS athlete Olivia Latimer (nee Hohnke) was diagnosed with an amelanomic melanoma when her baby was just four weeks old in February 2009. A fit, healthy, professional soccer player who regularly got her skin checked, Olivia struggles to accept the harsh reality of a melanoma diagnosis and the uncertain future she faces. Her daughters are now 2 years and 7 months old. Olivia has just had a CT scan that shows a spot on her right lung. She is waiting for results to see whether it is cancerous.
3. **Sydney: 32 year-old** Sonya Keddam's mother noticed a disfigured mole on her daughters back during a shopping trip. After removal of the mole and several lymph nodes, Sonya's scarring is significant. Sonya had been a regular solarium user. Her experience has made her an anti-sunbaking advocate, and she is hugely concerned about protecting her 9 year-old son from the dangers of over-exposure. Sonya currently has six monthly checkups with her specialist.
4. **Clayton, Melbourne: 25 year-old** Joe Dobson was diagnosed in January 2009 with a nodular melanoma (a rare but aggressive melanoma) on a toe on his left foot. Nodular melanoma does not respond well to chemotherapy or radiotherapy, so amputation of his toe was the only option. Joe's melanoma has metastasized with cancer cells present in his lymphatic system. Joe has spent a lot of unprotected time in the sun throughout his life. A self-confessed "control-freak" Joe has struggled with the 'wait, see and hope' aspect of an advanced melanoma diagnosis. Joe will turn 26 years old on the anniversary of Clare's death, 13 September.
5. **Melbourne: 45 year-old** Western Bulldogs Chief Executive and Australian Olympian (yachting) Campbell Rose is a melanoma survivor. He says he has been lucky, so far, but can't advocate enough the importance of being SunSmart.

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SKIN CANCER FACTS

- Since Clare's death, new legislation has been implemented in Victoria to prohibit under-18's and people with fair "Type 1" skin from using solariums.
- Victoria has seen a 45 percent decrease in the number of solariums operating in the last two years.
- On July 30, 2009, the World Health Organisation (WHO) increased solarium to the highest cancer risk category, "Carcinogenic to humans", alongside tobacco smoking, arsenic and asbestos.
- The Victorian Government recently committed a \$4.2 million funding boost to support skin cancer research and education initiatives to save lives and reduce the burden this preventable disease has on society.
- In Australia, more than 10,600 cases of melanoma are diagnosed annually, with more than 1,500 people dying from the disease each year.
- The most recent statistics show that 343 Victorians die from skin cancer each year, almost one person every day and higher than Victoria's annual road toll.
- Melanoma risk increases with exposure to UV radiation, particularly with episodes of sunburn.
- In those aged 15–44 years, melanoma is the most common cancer, making up almost a quarter of all cancers for this age group.
- Using solariums before the age of 35 boosts the risk of melanoma by 75%.
- Australian adolescents have by far the highest incidence of melanoma in the world, compared to other countries.
- Adolescence and childhood are critical periods during which sun exposure is more likely to contribute to skin cancer later in life.
- Increased sun protection against sun exposure will prevent skin cancer at whatever age it is applied.

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