

IPM for the Body

by Richard Matteson, CGCS

As turfgrass professionals, we have developed keen observation skills. We can detect minute irregularities on our golf course such as the initiation of snow mold, localized dry spots, weeds, etc. We then respond to correct the problems before they become disastrous. How often do we employ that same ability to detect abnormalities on our own bodies? Dr. Eileen Smith, a dermatologist from the Walla Walla Clinic, has spoken of the dangers of ignoring ourselves.

We are exposed to the sun's radiation in everyday activities. However, for those of us working on golf courses, our rate of exposure is higher than most. Even during the winter months, or periods of overcast skies, we are in danger of contracting skin cancer. Without detection these problems can become disastrous, even leading to death.

The skin is the largest organ of the body. It covers the internal organs and protects them from injury, protects them from infection, and controls the loss of too much water. The skin regulates body temperature, helps rid the body of excess water and salts, and provides for temperature and touch sensations.

Skin tumors can either be benign or malignant. Benign tumors are not cancerous. They do not spread in the body and can be removed by surgery, and they

are not likely to return. Malignant tumors are cancerous and it is this type that we should be on the lookout for, according to Dr. Smith. There are several types of skin cancer: basal cell, squamous cell and melanoma. Basal cell carcinoma accounts for more than ninety percent of all skin cancers in the United States. It is slow growing and seldom spreads to other parts of the body. Early detection usually results in minor surgery with insignificant scarring. However, if no action is taken, surgery can be major. Melanoma skin cancer is less common, but far more dangerous. Found in the melanocytes, melanoma is a malignant form of skin cancer and can spread to other parts of the body. If left untreated, malignant melanoma can kill a patient.

Dr. Smith recommends an annual examination by a trained dermatologist. However, the best prevention is to employ the same observation skills on ourselves that we use on our golf courses. Examine your entire body in a full length mirror monthly. Look for small, smooth, shiny, pale or waxy lumps. Get to know the pattern of moles, blemishes, freckles and other marks on your skin. Be particularly observant of spots that are changing in size, shape or color. Spots that are asymmetrical, have irregular borders, color variations or are larger than 6mm in diameter (the size of an eraser) should be examined by a physician. Look everywhere,

even where the sun does not shine; between the toes, the genitals, buttocks, etc. Melanoma can even occur in the eyes.

It is nearly impossible for us to avoid the sun. Dr. Smith highly recommends using sunscreens that are designed to block both UV-A and UV-B wave lengths with a minimum SPF factor of at least 15, or higher if your skin is fair. Wear large brimmed hats, sunglasses, long sleeved shirts and pants. Consider it IPM for the body.

Richard Matteson is the Superintendent at the Pendleton Country Club in Pendleton, Oregon
Credit: *Grass Clippings*, Idaho GCSA

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Turfgrass Field Day will be held July 24; the Virginia Tech Turfgrass Field Day will be held July 30-31. Your attendance means a great deal to the professors who work so hard to provide pertinent, scientific information to the turfgrass community. Please show your gratitude and support by attending the field convention for your. Lastly, our third annual Stewards of the Chesapeake tournament to raise funds for MAAGCS education and research will be held August 12, at Chevy Chase Club. Tournament Chairman Tim Norris, CGCS and host superintendent Dean Graves have planned a wonderful day for us. Assemble a foursome from your facility and come on out and enjoy a day of camaraderie and golf at one of the finest venues anywhere. I look forward to seeing you at Chevy Chase Club.



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