

Physios join in melanoma detection

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In the early 1990s, Dr Rui Avelar, a Vancouver family practitioner who specializes in sports medicine, was first asked to speak on skin pathology to a group of physiotherapists.

Today, Dr Avelar lectures three or four times a year to physiotherapists. Over the years, several physiotherapists have applied his lessons and brought potential problems to the attention of their clients.

After physiotherapist May Nolan attended one of Dr Avelar's presentations, she spotted a suspicious mole on a client's leg and urged her to check with her physician. The mole proved to be a melanoma, and the client was grateful for May's knowledgeable detection and warning.

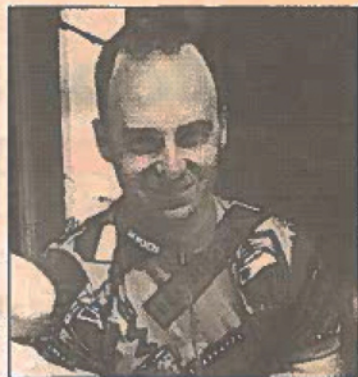
The Physiotherapy Association of BC (PABC) agrees with Dr Avelar that physiotherapists can be an important line of defense against skin cancer.

The PABC recently sponsored a campaign to educate physiotherapists on how to detect suspicious moles and other skin growths.

Physiotherapists, says Dr Avelar, "see more of their clients' skin than most medical practitioners, and they often see [their clients] regularly."

Doctors detect about 25 per cent of melanomas, according to the American Academy of Dermatologists — other health professionals, family, or friends discover the rest.

Dr Avelar tells physiotherapists that there is more to watch



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for than skin cancer. "Other skin diseases parlay into musco-skeletal problems," he says. "Anyone who has one auto-immune disease can have another."

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