USE OF SUNSCREENS AND OTHER PRODUCTS AS SKIN LIGHTENING PRACTICE: A SURVEY AMONG THE FEMALE STUDENTS OF SBMCH

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ABSTRACT
The use of sunscreens, skin-lightening products is common among young females. The aim of this study was to evaluate the extent of skin lightening practice, motivations behind the practice, awareness of the adverse effects and perception about skin care among the female students of SBMCH. Questionnaires regarding this were prepared and were distributed to 100 female students of our college to collect data regarding their usage and awareness of skin lightening products and sunscreens. Information was gathered. The data was analyzed and studied. Students in the age group of 19-29 years, were included in the study. The most common site of use is the face and skin irritation, the commonly experienced adverse effect. Majority of the respondents believed that lighter skin tone is healthier. Most of these students are well exposed to the information and have good knowledge of the harmful effects of the product. Despite knowing, it does not stop them from using it as they believe that having a lighter skin tone is for their own self-satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Skin lightening; Awareness; Hazards.

INTRODUCTION
Skin lightening is a practice in which a person willingly decides to reduce the physiological melanin pigmentation of the skin. The belief and practice to have lighter skin has been rooted from ancient times. Skin lightening products are readily available from major cosmetics companies, from local convenience stores, and widely over the internet. These types of products are marketed as skin-evening creams, skin lighteners, skin brighteners, skin whiteners, skin toners, fading creams, fairness creams or even sunscreens. Although both men and women engage in the skin lightening practice, of various sorts, women generally have higher rates of practice than men.

There is a widespread practice of skin lightening among the female students in our institution.

AIM
The aim of this study was to evaluate the extent of skin lightening practice, usage of sunscreens as a skin lightener, motivations behind the practice, awareness of the adverse effects and perception about fairness among the female students of SBMCH.

METHODS AND MATERIALS
This study was conducted among the female students of SBMCH. Self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 100 female students to study the behavior of skin lightening users and gather the information related to the practice of skin lightening, the knowledge, and also the perception about having lighter skin tone. The questionnaire consisted of sections like site of application, adverse effects, awareness about the various adverse effects, consideration while choosing a product and perception about fairness. The various perceptions included, that fair skin provides high self-esteem and the feeling of being healthy. The statistical analysis was performed and studied. Out of 100 students between the age 19-29 years, 69 were found to be using skin lightening products. The most common site of use is the face and skin irritation, the commonly experienced adverse effect. 66.67% agree that these products have harmful effects. They believe that having a lighter skin will provide higher self-esteem (28.98%), and make them healthier (71.02%). Most of the respondents considered recommendation from friend (59.42%). Others considered commercial television advertisements (21.73%) newspapers and internets (18.84%).
DISCUSSION
In agreement with other studies, we found that having a lighter shade of skin colour is always preferable, irrespective of one’s original colour.[1,2] The prevalence of use of skin lightening products has been reported 69% in females of SBMCH. Recommendation from friends (59.42%) and television commercials (21.73%) about skin lightening products are believed to change the perception of women regarding complexion which is evident from the results that 69% respondents agreed on that.[3]

CONCLUSION
In conclusion, most of these students are well exposed to the information and have good knowledge of the harmful effects of the product. However, despite knowing and being aware of the danger of skin lightening products, it does not stop them from using it as they believe that having a lighter skin tone is for their own self-satisfaction.

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