

Palm Beach serving the underserved

PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

John Strasswimmer, MD, with Audrey Jacobson, MD/MPH candidate.



One of the 16 approved grants was given to the Palm Beach County Society of Dermatology and Cutaneous Surgery in Florida for their project *Healthy Skin for Everyone: Improving Skin Cancer Access by Volunteer Dermatologists*. After seeing first-hand how underserved communities — particularly those with high minority populations — have statistically higher rates of skin cancer, yet lower rates of access to dermatologic services and education, it was clear there was a need for more effective materials and programs.

This need was compounded by the fact that most other educational efforts are known to produce materials that assume a minimum education level, which is often still too high, and even those written in Spanish are usually too advanced for basic comprehension. They also found that most educational programs use a one-way communication style where the presenters talk to participants — but not with them. Therefore, the *Healthy Skin for Everyone* project intends to create materials that are truly global so they can be given to people regardless of education level. They also want to create interactive programs where participants and community health workers work together to set healthy skin goals, conduct self-examinations, and increase awareness about sun protective behaviors.

John Strasswimmer, MD, PhD, principal investigator for the project and volunteer Mohs surgeon at the Caridad Center in Palm Beach County, described it as “a way to ensure that all of our neighbors — regardless of education, nationality, origin, or skin color — are aware that skin cancer can be prevented with education and cured with early treatment. We have a current article in *JAMA Dermatology* describing the success of this program. This truly is a life-saving project.”

To date, approximately 50 percent of the project has been completed. The first phase was to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to evaluate the current rates of skin cancer knowledge, risk perception, and sun protective behaviors in underserved populations. Using the results of that assessment, they moved on to phase two where they developed a pilot training program for community health workers; so far, they have

trained 19 workers and enrolled 114 participants in their pilot program. The next step was to create a mobile health (mHealth) text messaging program where participants sign up to receive weekly reminders about skin cancer prevention and detection. From there, they will create an official health worker training course hosted on an e-learning platform with video modules, quizzes, and activities, and will start integrating patients in need to the dermatology clinic at the Caridad Center in Boynton Beach, Florida for skin checks and other dermatologic services. Once the results from the pilot program have been analyzed, materials will be finalized for distribution to AAD members across the U.S.

“For many uninsured, minority, and underserved patients, skin cancer is diagnosed late, with limited treatment options,” said Audrey Jacobson, MD/MPH candidate at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, who worked as a research fellow to help develop the *Healthy Skin for Everyone* program. “If we educate patients about skin cancer, sun protection, and self-skin checks, we not only empower patients through knowledge but also can initiate treatment earlier.”

Mississippi Dermatology Society: Improving care in communities



MISSISSIPPI
Sabra Sullivan, MD, PhD, vice-president of the Mississippi Dermatological Society and chair of the AAD's Council on Government Affairs, Health Policy, and Practice.



MISSISSIPPI
Robert Brodell, MD, chair of the department of dermatology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

The Mississippi Dermatology Society earned one of the approved grants with its unique program — *Dermatology Days with the Mercy Delta Express Project*. Like many states across the U.S., there are certain populations in low economic areas that have little to no access to dermatologic services. In Mississippi, there are approximately 180 people living in Sharkey and Issaquena counties in need of care, and not a single dermatologist within a 45-mile radius.

To change that, the Mississippi Dermatology Society teamed up with the University Hospital dermatology department to not only provide dermatology care directly to those people, but teach the residents and medical students there about the