

Skin Cancer in Bahrain

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Objective: Study the incidence and pattern of skin cancer diagnosed in Bahrain among the indigenous Arabs and expatriate population

Methods: Review of histopathology archives in Bahrain between 1952-1999.

Results: Skin cancer account for 6.7% of all malignancies among Bahraini Arabs with 70.2% of the patients above the age of 60 years as compared to 43.8% in the expatriate group. It is 2.5 times more common in the expatriate population in their 4th and 5 decades of life than the Bahraini group. There were no Bahraini patients with MM in their 4th decade as compared to 52.9% in the expatriate group. In both groups, skin cancer particularly BCC predominantly affected the sun the exposed parts of the body. However, BCC and MM of the trunk and lower extremities is 3 times more common among the expatriate group than the Bahraini. Similarly the former group develop 7 times more non-invasive cancers than the Bahraini and also show 9 times more multicentric lesions than Bahraini. Four percent of skin cancers in Bahraini are lymphomas as compared to 0.4% in the expatriate group.

Conclusions. The incidence of skin in Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf countries is low as compared to those of Europe, North America and Australasia. The differences between the Arabs and expatriate population are due to the influence of genetic and ethnic background, local cultural habits of avoiding exposure to the biological effect of solar radiation and the protection provided by local costumes worn by men and women.