

Study Links Agent Orange Exposure to Higher Risk of Rare Melanoma

FEATURE IMPACT

A new study found U.S. veterans exposed to Agent Orange face a higher risk of developing a rare and often overlooked form of melanoma that appears on the hands and feet, and under the nails.

Researchers reported in "JAMA Dermatology" that veterans with documented exposure to the herbicide had significantly higher odds of developing acral melanoma, a subtype of skin cancer that forms on the palms, soles and nail beds.

Unlike most melanomas, which are associated with ultraviolet radiation, acral melanoma develops in areas not typically exposed to the sun. It can resemble a bruise under a toenail or a dark patch on the bottom of a foot - locations that are easily missed and not commonly associated with skin cancer.

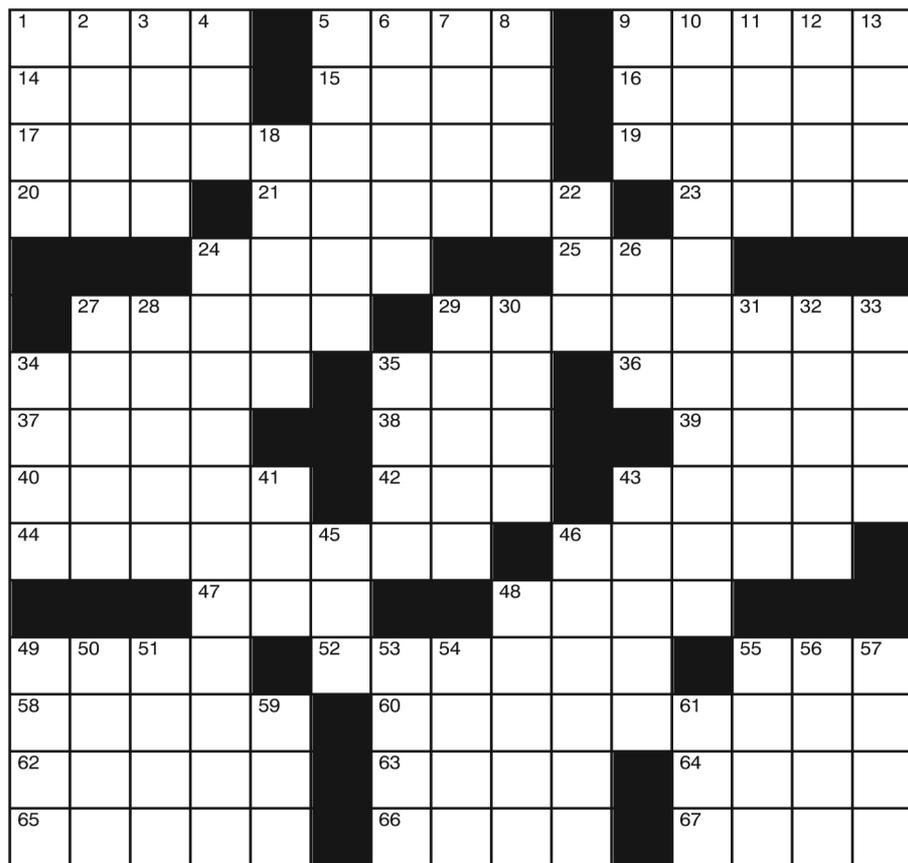
Because of its unusual appearance and location, acral melanoma is often diagnosed at later stages, when treatment is more difficult and survival rates are lower.

The researchers analyzed 20 years of Veterans Health Administration data, comparing more than 1,200 veterans diagnosed with acral melanoma with more than 5,000 veterans without melanoma. Veterans exposed to Agent Orange had about 30% higher odds of developing the disease.

The findings suggest Agent Orange may be an underrecognized risk factor for acral melanoma, particularly for veterans who may not view themselves as at risk for skin cancer because of limited sun exposure or darker skin tones.

"Identifying exposures that may increase risk can help inform earlier recognition and, ultimately, earlier diagnosis when treatment is most effective," said Marc Hurlbert, chief executive officer of the Melanoma Research Alliance and a principal investigator on the study. *Continues on next page*

CLEAN UP



CREATORS NEWS SERVICE

By Neil Manausa

ACROSS

- 1 Shade of green
- 5 Poisonous snakes
- 9 Role for Madonna
- 14 Line ___ veto
- 15 New York baseball stadium
- 16 Georgia city
- 17 Group of replacement players
- 19 Bloodhound's clue
- 20 Between Winnie and Pooh
- 21 Made a speech
- 23 Functions
- 24 Skyrocket
- 25 Parisian water
- 27 All arms and legs
- 29 Atwood heroine's occupation
- 34 Human resources transactions
- 35 Sly one
- 36 VP Agnew
- 37 Nobelist Wiesel
- 38 ___ got nothing to hide!
- 39 His cookies made him famous
- 40 Talented
- 42 "___ Miserables"
- 43 Vista
- 44 Spring holiday

- 46 Jobs
- 47 Pair
- 48 Service station meas.
- 49 ___ silly question . . .
- 52 1960s dance
- 55 Bambi's aunt
- 58 Songbirds
- 60 Dirty whirlwind
- 62 Disney mermaid
- 63 Pot starter
- 64 Chex ingredient
- 65 Impertinent
- 66 The say-hey kid of baseball
- 67 Holly

- 18 Library tomes
- 22 Leonine abode
- 24 Big money games
- 26 Classified items
- 27 Memorable comic Radner
- 28 Sign of spring
- 29 Hang around
- 30 Paul Bunyan implements
- 31 ___ Semple McPherson
- 32 Actor Jeremy
- 33 Measured portion
- 34 Pile
- 35 Do an office job
- 41 Drag
- 43 Unbroken
- 45 Oath

DOWN

- 1 Agenda
- 2 Yearning
- 3 Ordinary
- 4 Big bird
- 5 Off the path
- 6 Cut, as wool
- 7 Type of moss
- 8 Identical
- 9 Dorothy's aunt and others
- 10 Meat case wrappings
- 11 Sherbets
- 12 Muscle condition
- 13 Formicary residents
- 46 Adhesives
- 48 Breezy
- 49 Bumder!
- 50 Actress Gilbert
- 51 Actor/musician Kristofferson
- 53 Arkin, the younger
- 54 Food fish
- 55 Malevolent
- 56 Pleasant
- 57 Late "Jeopardy" host Trebek
- 59 Shrewd
- 61 Lincoln's Cap'n ___

SEE PAGE 20

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