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ALEXA

This new device can ‘X-ray’ moles to check for skin cancer

By Dana Wood

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Celebs Gigi Hadid (left) and Maya Rudolph have embraced their moles.
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Gigi Hadid needs to watch her figure, and we’re not talking about counting calories. The lanky stunner has embraced the galaxy of tiny moles on her frame, and is vocal about having them checked regularly — as she should. “People with a huge number of moles have a higher chance of skin cancer,” says New York dermatologist Debra Jaliman. “The more moles someone has, the more frequently they should have them checked.”

Jaliman speaks from experience: Roughly 10 years ago, she detected a mole on her right lower leg that turned out to be malignant melanoma in situ. “It was the size of a period at the end of a sentence and was dark black, like ink,” she recalls. “I feel fortunate to have found it early and to still be alive.”

But there’s a bright spot on the screening front: A new FDA-approved in-office device called the **Nevisense** is enabling skin docs to detect melanoma more accurately than with the standard visual technique. Rather than simply eyeballing a suspicious growth, slicing it off, sending it to a biopsy lab — and then waiting days for results — derms can now gather additional diagnostic information in minutes with a hand-held wand. The probe uses painless electrical impulses to detect cellular irregularities beneath the skin’s surface.

With the Nevisense, “each mole is given a numerical score correlating to the likelihood of whether it’s atypical or melanoma,” explains dermatologist Gary Goldenberg. His Manhattan practice, Goldenberg Dermatology, is the first US office to use the tool (charging \$250 to scan up to 10 lesions), which was created by Stockholm-based SciBase. Goldenberg and his patients decide together, based on a mole’s score, whether it should be biopsied. “Lesions with a low score may be monitored clinically,” he notes, rather than being sliced out.

There’s another promising diagnostic device in the pipeline that could also reduce unnecessary cutting. It’s called the sKan, and its young inventors, a team of undergrads from McMaster University in Canada, recently nabbed a \$40,000 prize as the 2017 international winners of the James Dyson Award for design engineering. The money will be used to refine their low-cost, non-invasive melanoma detector, which uses temperature sensors to pinpoint trouble spots. (According to the creators’ research, cancerous tissue heats up more quickly than non-cancerous tissue.)

That’s good news for Hadid, Jennifer Lawrence, Maya Rudolph and all their mole sisters.

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