

INTRODUCTION

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Cancer is an important, challenging and increasing health problem. It is a global cause of death ranked third in developing countries after infectious-parasitic diseases and diseases of the cardiovascular system , whereas, it ranked second to cardiovascular diseases as a cause of death in developed countries (*El-Hattab and Nouh, 1998*).

Of all cancers, the most common cancer is cancer of the skin. In the USA alone, the incidence of skin cancer was estimated to be 900,000-1,200,000 cases annually, almost equal to 1,228,600 cases of all other cancers combined (*Landis et al, 1998*). In the year 2000, it was estimated that one in every three cancers diagnosed is a skin cancer according to Skin Cancer Foundation's statistics in USA (*Jerant et al, 2000*).

It is customary to divide skin cancer into: non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) and melanoma skin cancer (MSC). They differ in clinical appearance, site of occurrence, histological characteristics, rate of growth, pattern of inheritance, tendency for local recurrence, and risk for metastasis. They also differ in their incidence; NMSC incidence is much higher than that of MSC. Currently, between 2 and 3 million NMSC cases occur globally each year, whereas, MSC cases are approximately 132,000 globally each year (*McGovern and Lefell, 2000*).

Although, NMSC has a low mortality rate; it is responsible for considerable morbidity (in terms of functional and cosmetic outcome of the lesion and its treatment) and utilization of health services. Thus NMSC constitutes a major world public health problem, particularly in countries with high incidence rates such as Australia and USA (*Miller, 1995*).

World-wide efforts have been made to estimate NMSC true incidence, mortality and morbidity rates, determine the population at risk, find clues to its etiology, and implying these informations in their prevention and control.

In our country, epidemiological studies about skin cancer are lacking. This harbors understanding the overall profile and magnitude of NMSC as a health problem in Egypt.

This behooved us to carry on a study on NMSC incidence, risk factors and clinico-pathological features in Benha University Hospital, Dermatology Department, hoping to be a probable start for a multicenteric studies allover Egypt.
