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# The Psychological Impact of Facial Skin Cancer

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# Background

- Non-melanoma skin cancers are generally considered to have a low mortality & little impact on quality of life (QoL).
- 80% of non-melanoma skin cancers occur in the head and neck
- Thus both the skin cancer and the scars following surgical excision are conspicuously placed in a cosmetically sensitive area.
- Facial disfigurement results in anxiety, depression and social isolation
- The severity of this often bears little relationship to the magnitude of the defect itself.

# Study Aims & Design

- This study was designed to quantify the social, emotional and aesthetic impact of facial skin cancers on patients before and after surgical excision.
- 53 patients were prospectively recruited
- Patients were assessed before and three months after surgery using the Skin Cancer Index (SCI)\*.
- This is a 15 item, disease-specific, quality of life assessment tool which measures three distinct subscales: **emotion**, **social** and **appearance**.
- Higher scores reflect an improvement in QoL.

\*Rhee JS, Matthews BA, Neuberg M, et al. The skin cancer index: clinical responsiveness and predictors of quality of life. Laryngoscope 2007;117:399e405.

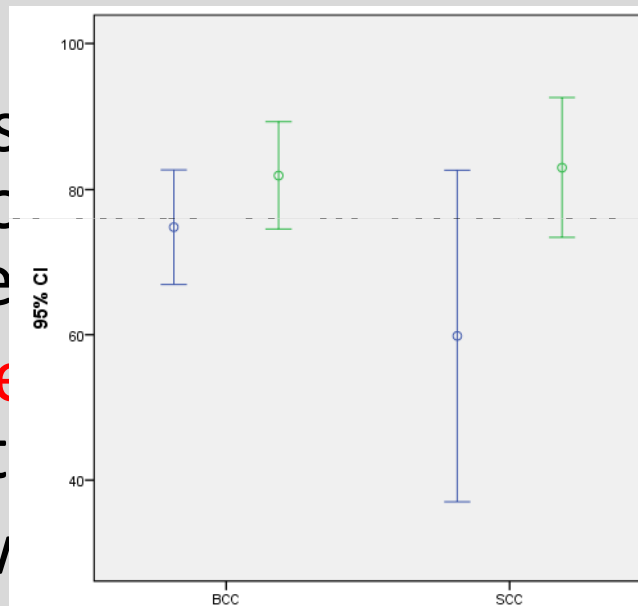
# Results - Overall

Surgical excision led to a significant improvement in both the total SCI score (from 70.0 to 82.4,  $p < 0.001$ ) and in each of the individual sub-scale scores

Skin Cancer Index	Pre-surgery mean SCI (SD)	Post-surgery mean SCI (SD)	Change in mean SCI (SD)	p value
Total SCI score	70.0 (25.3)	82.4 (18.4)	12.4 (17.4)	<0.001
Emotional score	66.6 (27.1)	77.6 (20.0)	11.0 (17.6)	<0.001
Social score	75.5 (28.3)	85.7 (23.1)	10.2 (26.3)	0.007
Appearance score	68.7 (34.3)	85.2 (23.1)	16.5 (27.7)	<0.001

# Results - Breakdown

- SCI scores in patients with **SCCs** improved over 3 times more than those in patients with BCCs (**p=0.016**)



- Age, gender, s closure did not change in overall impact on
- Increasing **age** greater surgery
- **Women** show improvement than men in the **appearance & emotional** subscales
- **Men** improved more in the **social** subscale

# Conclusions

- Surgical excision improves social, emotional & cosmetic wellbeing in patients with cutaneous facial malignancies
- This improvement is most evident in patients with SCCs
- Female & younger patients are most vulnerable to quality of life anxieties pre-operatively