

# Der Pathologe

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## Clinicopathological characteristics of cutaneous melanoma in the European country with the highest incidence: a population based study, 1996–2011

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**Background.** Aim of the present study is to assess the incidence trend of cutaneous melanoma in Southern Switzerland, a region with the highest incidence rate and a pure opportunistic screening strategy reaching 35% of the population at risk.

**Methods.** All invasive and in-situ incident cases occurred in 1996–2011 were retrieved from the Ticino Cancer Registry. European age-standardized incidence rates were computed by period of diagnosis, Breslow thickness and histological types. Trends were measured as the annual percentage change (APC) and the corresponding confidence interval (95% CI).

**Results.** A total of 1464 patients had a diagnosis of cutaneous melanoma, 1230 invasive and 234 in-situ. Invasive cases were categorized as: superficial-spreading-melanoma (55.7%), nodular-melanoma (10.0%), lentigo-maligna-melanoma (5.5%), melanoma-not-other-wise-specified (25.2%) and other-types (3.6%). Incidence rate of invasive melanoma rose from 17.4 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1996–2003 to 20.6 in 2004–2011, with an overall APC of +2.1% (95% CI: -0.8;+5.1; p=0.15). The increasing incidence trend was observed for superficial-spreading-melanoma (APC=+2.9%; 95% CI: -1.1; +7.0; p=0.14) and thin melanomas (i.e.  $\leq 1.00$  mm; APC=+3.4%; 95% CI: +0.2; +6.7; p=0.04), whereas we detected a descriptive growing incidence for thick melanomas (APC=+2.1; 95% CI: -1.4/+5.8; p=0.22).

**Conclusions.** The present study highlights first an increase of incidence trend of superficial-spreading melanoma and thin melanoma, as possible consequence of secondary prevention measures; second a lack of decrease of nodular-melanoma and thick melanoma, phenomenon that could explain the lack of expected mortality reduction. These results suggest that in Southern Switzerland there is room for additional public health efforts; particularly, primary and secondary prevention campaigns targeted at specific populations could additionally reduce melanoma mortality.