

# Community Skin Check Clinic Reduces Barriers, Demonstrates Value of Collaboration

## BACKGROUND

Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the U.S. It's estimated that 840 people in Nevada will be diagnosed with melanoma in 2024, and thousands more will be diagnosed with basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas.<sup>1</sup> Melanoma incidence has been increasing nationwide and has tripled since 1975.<sup>1</sup> In 2023, Nevada ranked among the states with the lowest incidence rates for melanoma in the U.S., coming in 47th, but now ranks 33rd.

Additionally, Nevada has more than 300 annual days of sunshine, high elevation, many outdoor occupations, and a culture of outdoor recreation, all contributing to its higher risk for skin cancer.

When found early, skin cancer is very treatable, often in a provider's office. In its earliest stages, melanoma has a 99% survival rate. However, only about one-third of people diagnosed with late-stage melanoma will survive five years after diagnosis.



## CHALLENGE

Nevada falls far below the national average for dermatologists per capita, with 2.2 physicians per 100,000 people versus the national average of 4.7 per 100,000.<sup>2</sup> While Washoe County has close to the national average with 4.4 dermatologists per 100,000 residents, those dermatologists likely serve many patients who do not reside within the county. Most rural and frontier counties across northern Nevada have no dermatologists, and people must travel to more urban counties for services.

In addition to a provider shortage, many patients experience barriers to regular skin cancer screening. The screening service is not included as a free covered preventive service under the Affordable Care Act provisions and may be unaffordable to some patients. As with other cancer screening and health services, patients may also be unable to take time off work, be uninsured, or have transportation or childcare challenges that prevent them from visiting a doctor.



## OPPORTUNITY

In partnership with dermatologist Dr. Whitney Hovenic, her colleagues at Skin Cancer and Dermatology Institute, and students from the University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine, NCC had previously offered free skin checks in existing clinical settings. However, to increase the community impact, Dr. Hovenic and NCC sought to provide a free skin check event in a community setting to expand access and help overcome barriers to screening.

## ACTIVITY

Dr. Hovenic served as the physician champion for the “Biggest Little Skin Cancer Screening” event, held Tuesday, May 7, from 4-7 p.m. at Greater Nevada Field in partnership with NCC. Together, they coordinated event details and led event promotion through social media and the distribution of a press release and flyer. Partnerships were also leveraged to execute the event, including:



- Reno Aces for use of the minor league baseball stadium, including suites in which to see patients and catering, and to assist with distributing the press release and social media promotion.
- Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve for a city proclamation, endorsement from a trusted leader, community exposure, and event promotion directly to city employees.
- News reporter Kristen Remington for several news features.
- Fellow dermatologists to increase screening capacity for the event.
- Business associates to sponsor the event and provide promotional items for attendees' swag bags.
- University of Nevada, Reno medical student volunteers to direct attendees, assist with intake paperwork, provide on-site support, and schedule follow-up through future university clinics.



Left to right: Washoe County Commissioner Mike Clark and Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve presented proclamations for the skin check clinic to NCC's Lily Helzer, Dr. Hovenic, and Reno Aces' Chris Phillips. Mayor Schieve marveled at the many people that came to get their skin checked. NCC navigator Valerie Martinez and a dermatology scheduler worked to connect people with follow-up appointments.

## OUTCOME

Dozens of people were lined up at least 30 minutes before the event doors opened, demonstrating demand for skin check services. Event promotion resulted in nearly \$40,000 in earned media and 16,100 social media impressions. Some who attended said they didn't like going to doctors' offices, couldn't take time off work, did not have insurance, or had been putting off their health.

NCC is working with Dr. Hovenic to educate other dermatologists and community organizations about the event and how to implement similar activities in their communities. Future skin check clinics are also being considered to continue this work.

**182**

people screened  
for skin cancer

**65**

people referred for  
clinical follow-up

**11**

“likely” skin cancers  
identified on site

**4**

lesions identified on  
site as suspicious for  
melanoma

**Of the suspicious melanomas, two were biopsy-confirmed with one stage 1a excised with clear margins as of July 2024.**

Citations:

1 American Cancer Society. Cancer Statistics Center, accessed 7/3/24 at <https://cancerstatisticscenter.cancer.org/>

2 Nevada Instant Atlas, accessed 7/3/24 at <https://med2.unr.edu/SI/CountyData/atlas.html>.

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