

Another Reason Why Fun in the Sun Should Include a Jacket

By Fritz Beter

Assistant Chapter Director LA-K

Let me start this by saying something we perhaps sometimes don't think about in regard to motorcycle safety: Motorcycle clothing protects in more ways than one—protection in case of a crash and also protection from the sun. This article concerns that second form of protection.

My story starts with summer riding jackets that my wife, Johnette, and I bought about two years ago. These were the mesh jackets with padding. (If you do not have one, get one. You would not believe how cool they are during the summer. They also keep your arms out of the sun.) But even after I got the jacket, I didn't take it with me all of the time. Yeah, I am like a lot of people who want to get that good looking tan.

Well, soon there was this little spot on my forearm that I did nothing about for a year. And even after it got bigger, I didn't go to the doctor right away.

Finally one day, after a lot of nagging from my wife, I went to the doctor. One look (at what I thought was a mole) and the doctor told me that it did not look good. He removed it and sent the tissue to the lab. After a week of waiting, I received the call that nobody wants: "Mr. Beter, the test came back positive, you have stage 4 Melanoma. I have set you up with my surgeon so that he can help you."

Melanoma is one of those cancers that can show up and kill you without being seen. It can be caused by exposure to the sun.

I am lucky that mine was visible. But the doctor told me I will have to be checked twice a year so that, if something should come up, we can take care of it quickly. I will also have to get a Pet Scan once a year.

The ending to this story turns out to be a

happy one. The mole was smaller than the size of an M&M and the surgeon cut out a circle the size of a tennis ball, down to the muscle, but the main lymph node they removed from under my arm turned out to be negative. At this time I am classified as cancer-free, but I have been through a lot, all because I didn't go to the doctor right away and, for much too long, hadn't protected myself from the sun.

Please remember wearing protective clothing when riding serves not only the purpose of protecting you in a crash, it can also help protect you from melanoma.

Also, please have ALL dark moles checked by your doctor immediately.

I have been given a second chance at life, and I hope sharing this information with you helps you find yet another reason to wear protective gear.

