Case Study #3. “Dark and Lovely?”

Part 1. Soaking up the Sun

Judy sat up, took a swig from her water bottle, and wiped the sweat off of her face. She glanced at her watch and frowned. Had they only been out here for half an hour? Man, trying to get a good tan was way too much work. She glanced over at Mariah who was sleeping peacefully in her lounge chair. No wonder she looked like a Greek goddess every summer—she enjoyed lying in the sun. Judy decided that her normally pasty-white skin was tan enough, getting a little red again in fact, and she started to gather her things. Anyway, she reasoned, a dark tan might clash with her red hair.

Judy stopped for a second to scratch her calf. It had been itching for several days now, and she figured that the mosquitoes had really gotten her at the barbecue the other night. Since she was on the ground, she bent her neck to look at it and was surprised to see that it wasn't a mosquito bite but a mole. She'd had this mole ever since she could remember, but it had never itched before. She looked a little more closely and noticed that the mole looked kind of different than she remembered. It was a little bigger and the edges were sort of jagged. One edge was a bit darker than the other and in the middle was a raised purplish-black dot that she tried to wipe away but couldn't. As she was staring at her leg, Mariah woke up.

"What are you day dreaming about, your hot date with Tim tomorrow night?" Mariah teased as she rolled on her side, her black hair falling into her eyes.

Judy shook her head, "Ha, ha, I do have more things in my life to ponder. Anyway, I just noticed that a mole on my leg looks kind of weird and it keeps itching."

Mariah sat up with a concerned look on her face. "Let me see it." As she looked at Judy's leg, she said quietly, "Maybe you should go to the clinic." As Judy stared at her, she continued. "My mom sent me a pamphlet on skin cancer last year. You know, trying to convince me to stop lying in the sun so much. I glanced through it before I tossed it into the garbage. I remember some of the pictures of skin cancer and they kind of looked like your mole."

"What are you talking about?" Judy said defensively. "How could I have skin cancer? I'm barely in the sun compared to you."

"Alright, alright. It's not like I'm a doctor or something. I just remember those pictures. Come on, let's just call the clinic so they can check you out. I'm sure they'll tell you I'm crazy."

Questions:

1. What are some differences between Judy and Mariah that might make Judy more "at risk" for skin cancer than Mariah?
2. What observations did Judy make concerning her mole?