

Evaluation and feasibility of a remote patient guide to improve the quality of clinical photographs in cutaneous lymphoma, during COVID-19

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Introduction

Primary cutaneous lymphoma is a rare disease with management focussed in specialist centres. During the COVID-19 pandemic, to reduce the potential risk to patients of attending out-patient appointments, there has been a move to performing telephone consultations using patient taken photographs to clinically assess lesions. The aim of this study was to assess the patient's photographs in terms of technical and diagnostic quality.

Methods

- 10 patients with cutaneous lymphoma consented to participate during the COVID-19 pandemic
- A guide was sent to each patient with instructions on how to take the photographs (see Figure 1)
- Using a validated scoring matrix each photograph was assessed by a professional medical photographer and a Consultant Dermatologist
- Comparisons were made between the 2 independent observers using 7 questions on a scoring matrix relating to the technical quality of the photograph
- The Dermatologist was also asked to score the images based on diagnostic quality

Results

- Patient demographics: n=9 (90%) male, median age 66.5 (46-83) years
- Total number (range) of photographs assessed: 71 (1-22)
- Overall the technical quality of the photographs was acceptable
- 95% of the photographs were close up and in focus
- ≥60% used a ruler in the image to measure lesions
- 40% used a plain background as described in the guide
- 90% were defined as being satisfactory for diagnostic purposes with no improvements required

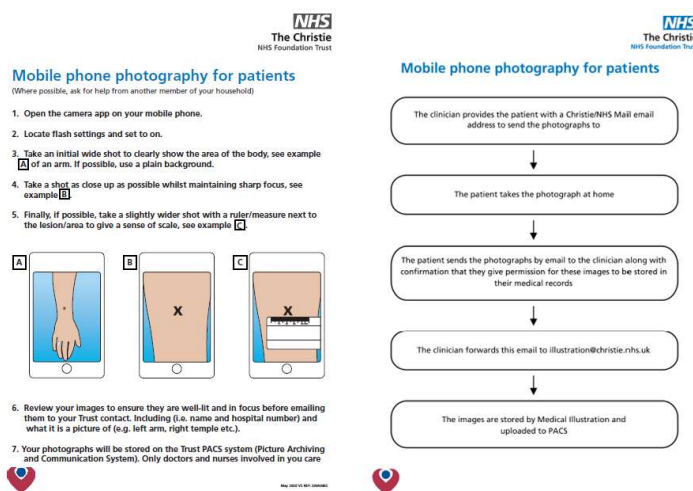


Figure 1: Patient guide and pathway to take medical photographs



Figure 2: Photographs taken by the patient following the guide

Conclusion

With suitable guidance, photographs taken by patients are of good technical and diagnostic quality. In the future, patients may benefit from remote consultations, particularly if they live distant from the treating centre. In this setting, clinical photographs taken by the patient are important in allowing the clinician to adequately assess the patient's progress.

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