

Dermoscopy Compliance: Improving Melanoma Detection Pathways Through Quality Improvement

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Abstract : Melanoma accounts for 80% of skin cancer-related deaths globally. The poor prognosis and increasing incidence of melanoma impose a significant burden on global healthcare systems. Early detection, precise diagnosis, and preventative strategies are critical to improving patient outcomes. Dermoscopy is the gold standard for specialist assessments of pigmented skin lesions, as it can differentiate between benign and malignant growths with greater accuracy than visual inspection. In the United Kingdom, guidelines from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) state dermoscopy should be used in all specialist assessments of pigmented skin lesions. Compliance with this guideline is low, resulting in missed and delayed melanoma diagnoses. To address this problem, a quality improvement project was initiated at Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust (BHT) within the plastic surgery department. The target group was a trainee and consultant plastic surgeons conducting outpatient skin cancer clinics. Analysis of clinic documentation over a one-month period found that only 62% (38/61) of patients referred with pigmented skin lesions were examined using dermoscopy. To increase dermoscopy rates, teaching was delivered to the department highlighting national guidelines and the evidence base for dermoscopic examination. In addition, clinic paperwork was redesigned to include a text box for dermoscopic examination. Reauditing after the intervention found a significant increase in dermoscopy rates (52/61, $p = 0.014$). In conclusion, implementing a quality improvement project with targeted teaching and documentation template templates successfully increased dermoscopy rates. This is a promising step toward improving early melanoma detection and patient outcomes.

Keywords : melanoma, dermoscopy, plastic surgery, quality improvement

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