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Title

Utility of Dermoscopy Training in Improving Diagnostic Accuracy of Skin Lesions Amongst Physician Assistant Students

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Education and training

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: Patients often present to primary care for skin lesion concerns, and an increasing proportion of the primary care workforce is made up of Physician Assistants (PAs). Dermoscopy is a tool that enhances diagnostic accuracy when evaluating skin lesions. However, most primary care providers, including PAs, cannot achieve dermoscopy expertise given the wide scope of their practice. Objective: Determine if concise training on the triage amalgamated dermoscopy algorithm (TADA) improves the detection of malignant and benign skin lesions amongst PA students. Study Design: Concise training centered around the TADA method was delivered. All PA students took a pre- and post-training test, consisting of 30 dermoscopic images to measure their improvement after training. Setting & Population Studied: First year PA students at all five Minnesota PA Programs. Intervention: 50 minute dermoscopy training, curriculum designed and administered by the research team. Outcome Measure: Score on post-test compared to pre-test. Results: A total of 139/149 (93%) PA students completed both the pre- and post-training test. Mean scores for all students increased significantly ($p=0.0007$) after dermoscopy training (18.5 ± 7.1 vs. 23.8 ± 6.7). Conclusions: After a concise TADA-based training session, PA students improved their ability to assess dermoscopy images of both skin cancer and benign lesions accurately, suggesting that PAs can be trained as novice dermoscopists and provide better dermatologic care to patients, while reducing healthcare expenditure by minimizing unnecessary referral and/or skin biopsies.