

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The additive value of second opinion teleconsulting in the management of patients with challenging inflammatory, neoplastic skin diseases: a best practice model in dermatology?

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Abstract

Background Telemedicine is the practice of healthcare using interactive processes of communication to facilitate healthcare delivery, including diagnosis, consultation and treatment, as well as education and transfer of medical data. The aim of teledermatology, just as telemedicine, is to promote best practice procedures and to improve the consistency and competence of health care.

Aim To investigate the diagnostic additive value of second opinion teleconsulting in patients with challenging dermatoses, among dermatologists working in two different dermatology departments.

Setting Thirty-three cases of patients with challenging inflammatory and neoplastic skin diseases at the University of L'Aquila Department of Dermatology were sent for teleconsultation to the Department of Dermatology, Medical University of Graz, Austria.

Methods All cases were selected in the outpatient service in L'Aquila. After face-to-face consultation with a local colleague had been completed, images were sent using a store-and-forward (SAF)-based system (<http://www.telederm.org>) to Graz. Histopathological examination together with follow-up of the patient represents the diagnostic gold standard for this study.

Results Telediagnosis was correct in 26 of 33 (78.8%) cases. Sixteen of 33 cases (48.5%) had already been diagnosed face-to-face by at least one of the two dermatologists in L'Aquila. In 10 of 33 cases (30.3%), the correct diagnosis was made in teleconsultation only.

Conclusions Second opinion teleconsulting may represent an additive value in the diagnosis of numerous challenging inflammatory and neoplastic skin diseases. It may be particularly useful as a best practice model for smaller departments in order to discuss and/or to confirm diagnoses and also for the management of patients with unusual difficult dermatoses.