

Patient adherence to skin self-examination:
effect of nurse intervention with
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Brief report

Patient adherence to skin self-examination: effect of nurse intervention with photographs

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Abstract

Background

Results from a single case–control study suggest that skin self-examination (SSE) has the potential to reduce mortality from melanoma by 63%. Despite these encouraging results, SSE rates are low. Few prospective studies of interventions to increase SSE in high-risk cohorts have been performed. The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of a brief nurse-delivered intervention using digital photographs on patients' adherence to performing SSE.

Design setting/participants

Patients at high risk for melanoma skin cancer (five or more dysplastic nevi) (N=100)

were recruited from the outpatient Pigmented Lesion Clinic at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. All participants had baseline whole-body digital photography as part of their clinical evaluation.

Intervention

Patients were randomized: Group A ($n = 49$) received a teaching intervention (physician and nurse education module) with a photo book (personal whole-body photographs compiled in the form of a booklet, with nurse instruction on how to use the photographs); and Group B ($n = 51$) received the teaching intervention only without a photo book.

Main outcome/measures

Self-administered questionnaires were provided at three intervals: baseline, post-teaching intervention, and at the 4-month post-baseline visit. To assess adherence with SSE, patients were asked, "How many times in the past 4 months did you (or someone else) usually, thoroughly examine your skin?"

Results

In Group A (teaching intervention with photo book), 10.2% of the patients at baseline reported skin examination three or more times during the past 4 months, while 61.2% reported skin examination three or more times at the 4-month follow-up ($p = 0.039$ for paired comparison). In Group B (teaching intervention only), nearly 20% of the patients at baseline reported skin examination three or more times during the past 4 months, while 37% reported skin examination three or more times at the 4-month follow-up ($p = 0.63$). The increase in reported skin examination was compared between the two groups ($>51\%$ v $>17.6\%$, $p = 0.001$).

Conclusions

The results suggest that a brief nurse-delivered intervention is effective at increasing patient adherence with SSE. Utilizing digital photographs as an adjunct to screening appeared to increase patient adherence to performing SSE.



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