IMPROVING PATIENT CARE WITH TELEDERMATOLOGY

Australian dermatologists are using teledermatology to help their patients in rural and remote areas to access specialist health care services.

There are two models of telehealth currently being used by dermatologists – videoconferencing and store-and-forward. Store-and-forward is when a dermatologist provides a diagnosis using digital images taken by a patient’s General Practitioner (GP) or another doctor. As technology advances, these new models of care will provide much needed dermatology services to patients with skin conditions or skin cancers in rural areas, or for those who can’t easily get to their doctor.

Professor H Peter Soyer is currently the Director of the Dermatology Research Centre (DRC) at The University of Queensland (UQ). He has been working in clinical research in Australia for 10 years with a primary research focus in the early detection of melanoma using new technology such as teledermatology.

Professor Soyer, dermatologist with the ACD says: “Teledermatology can rapidly reduce waiting times and the burden on patients and the health care system, particularly in rural and remote regions of Australia. Our research shows that diagnosis of skin conditions with teledermatology is accurate and reliable.”

The Dermatology Research Centre conducted a study of patients presenting with dermatology conditions in the Emergency Department of the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane. The results found that 93% of cases received a dermatologist’s opinion within two hours using teledermatology and there was 98% agreement between tele-diagnosis and the final diagnosis. While currently not funded by Medicare, store-and-forward telehealth may provide significant improvements in the quality of care for dermatology emergencies and for long term patient management.

Prof Soyer says: “My aim is to raise the profile of academic dermatology in Queensland and Australia. Just recently Professor David Whiteman and I initiated the Australian Skin and Skin Cancer (ASSC) Research Centre as a joint venture between UQ and the Queensland Institute if Medical Research (QIMR) Berghofer Medical Research Institute. The ASSC has four tiers of research in skin, naevus, melanoma and keratinocyte cancer and is reaching significant critical mass as a skin and skin cancer research hub in Queensland and beyond.”

Future research efforts will focus on expanding the use of store-and-forward teledermatology and the use and benefits of consumer mobile teledermoscopy devices.

Prof Soyer says: “Clinical research takes time, dedication and commitment. I am passionate about my research and the key is persistence, with the ultimate goal to embed research into the health service.”

References


Links to further information

Professor H Peter Soyer profile

University of Queensland Dermatology Research Centre

A-Z of Skin

Find a local dermatologist

For further information on the ACD, visit www.dermcoll.edu.au, or see our updates on Facebook or Twitter at @DermatologyACD #dermcoll or LinkedIn

ENDS

About the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD):

The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

Media enquiries:

For more information, images, or to arrange an interview with a dermatologist, please contact:

Roshan Riddell
Marketing and Communications Specialist
Australasian College of Dermatologists
+61 2 8741 4150
roshan@dermcoll.edu.au