

Dermatoscopy in Skin of Color: How Different are We?

Dermatoscopy is a rapidly evolving branch in clinical dermatology that has attracted an enhanced interest in recent years. Skin surface microscopy was first used in the mid-17th century by Peter Borelus and Johan Christophorus Kolhaus.^[1] Johann Saphier, coined the term “dermatology” in 1920 and outlined the possible clinical applications of skin surface microscopy.^[1] In late 1900s, Friedman and colleagues popularized “dermoscopy” with its widespread application in detection of skin cancers.^[2] Though the traditional and well-established indication of dermatology is in early detection of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers, its application has advanced in recent years to pigmentary, inflammatory, and infective dermatoses.^[3] Site-specific application of dermatoscope for hair and nail are better known as trichoscopy and onychoscopy.^[4,5]

The dermatoscopic appearance varies with the skin phototype of the subject.^[6-9] This is due to the color contrast provided by the background pigment network. Also, the application of dermatoscope varies drastically according to the skin phototype. In patients with lighter skin tones (Fitzpatrick skin phototype I-III) dermatology has become an indispensable part of screening and early diagnosis of skin cancers. In contrast, among patients with darker skin phototypes (Fitzpatrick IV-VI), it is commonly used as an auxiliary tool in diagnosing inflammatory and pigmentary dermatoses. Certain dermatoses are unique to pigmented races and dermatoscopic knowledge of such dermatoses is limited.^[10,11] Since majority of the published literature on dermatology is among Caucasians and with an aim to promote the dermatoscopic knowledge among Indian skin, Indian Dermatology Online Journal had conceptualized and initiated a dedicated section “*Through the dermoscope*”.^[12]

In last 4 years since introducing this exclusive section, many relevant articles on dermatology of ethnic skin have been published. In the current issue of the journal, a symposium on “Dermatoscopy in Skin of Color” have articles pertaining to dermatology in pigmentary diseases, inflammatory and granulomatous dermatoses, and infections and infestations specifically highlighting the unique features in pigmented skin and dermatoscopic practice in tropical countries. (to be quoted).

Skin imaging has been rapidly evolving than ever before. Dermatoscopy has found its non-conventional application in diagnosing diseases of mucosa, sweat glands, tropical infections, and infestations.^[13-16] Various innovations and modification have been suggested to suit local needs, special sites, and overall to enhance the practice of dermatology. Confocal microscopy and cutaneous ultrasonography are other arms of skin imaging whose use is currently limited

to advanced dermatological centers and research institutes. Widespread availability of these imaging modalities in future may herald a sub-specialty of cutaneous imaging. Stored dermatoscopic and confocal microscopy images may also have a role in machine learning and artificial intelligence with widespread diagnostic and prognostic application.^[17]

Skin imaging is likely to be an indispensable part of residency programs and dermatology practice in the near future. We hope our readers are benefitted through this symposium and also encourage postgraduates and practitioners to incorporate dermatology in their daily clinical practice.

Sunil Dogra, Keshavamurthy Vinay

Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, India

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Sunil Dogra,
Department of Dermatology, Venereology, and Leprology, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research - 160 012, India.

Editor, Indian Dermatology Online Journal (IDOJ)

E-mail: editor@idoj.in, sundogra@hotmail.com

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