

An Atlas of Surface Microscopy of Pigmented Skin Lesions: Dermoscopy

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2nd Edition (with self-test CD-ROM)

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Melanoma and skin cancers are common in New Zealand; even so, checking skin lesions forms only a small part of the daily work of the average GP.

This atlas exposes the reader to the many and varied appearances of pigmented lesions as seen under the dermatoscope. Both the atlas itself and the CD-ROM provide an excellent opportunity to rapidly familiarise oneself with the diagnostic features of melanoma. Indeed, the authors report *'...a 39% improvement in the sensitivity for the diagnosis of melanoma using this Atlas (First Edition) as the basis of an education intervention for primary care physicians...'*

There are numerous photographs, and their clarity and detail is excellent. It would have been nice, however, to have had a centimetre scale included with every picture to give some idea of the actual size of the lesions.

Chapter 2 deals with the diagnostic features of surface microscopy. This is the first time I have read a text on dermoscopy and I found it very difficult to absorb all the information. If, like me, you did not relish the pathology sessions at Med School, I would suggest you skip this chapter and return to it later for reference as you read the other chapters. The content of Chapter 2 then becomes much more meaningful and, therefore, memorable.

Subsequent chapters deal with each different group of skin lesions (benign pigmented macules, melanocytic nevi, melanoma and non-melanocytic pigmented tumours).

In the chapter on melanoma a method for diagnosing melanoma using the dermatoscope

is described. The authors claim that this method has a sensitivity of 92% for melanoma (i.e. 8% of melanoma will not have the features they describe). I found the method described well explained, easy to use and nicely illustrated by the accompanying photographs. It will, I am sure, improve my diagnosis of melanoma.

This method for diagnosing melanoma is included in the authors' *'two step procedure for diagnosis of pigmented skin lesions'*. The two step procedure is a well structured way of looking at the features of a pigmented lesion, and each of the 217 lesions in the accompanying self-test CD-ROM are described in the same manner.

We all have different learning styles. I find self testing after reading a useful way of consolidating the information I have read. I was therefore pleased to see the inclusion of a self-test CD-ROM with the Atlas. The pictures are very good, but I was disappointed that the CD-ROM was not more interactive (for example, though you can look at the lesion and tick the diagnostic features you have seen, the true answers are not superimposed on yours but on the next page so it is difficult to correct yourself. Also, I had trouble enlarging the picture despite a tick-box for this purpose). Despite these drawbacks the CD-ROM is a very welcome and useful addition to the Atlas.

Armed with this Atlas and a dermatoscope I am sure that I will find looking at 'spots' a less threatening experience than I have hitherto.

Reviewed by Dr Sue Blake, Whangamata