The Diagnosis of Melanoma

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A personal approach

To not miss melanoma
To accurately diagnose melanoma as early as possible

This will lack detail in…

Clinical features of melanoma
Dermatoscopic features of melanoma
Epidemiology of melanoma
Know yourself

1. Know the features of melanoma
2. Know your limitations

Know your patient

3. Understand the important risk factors
4. Assess the individual
5. Examine properly
6. Biopsy appropriately
1 Know the features of melanoma
ABCDE of Melanoma

- **A - ASYMMETRY**: one half unlike the other half.

- **B - BORDER**: irregular, scalloped or poorly defined border.

- **C - COLOUR**: varied from one area to another; shades of tan, brown, and black; sometimes white, red, or blue.

- **D - DIAMETER**: melanomas are usually greater than 6mm when diagnosed, but they can be smaller.

- **E - EVOLVING**: a mole or skin lesion that looks different from the rest or is changing in size, shape, or colour.
Many clinical subtypes..

- Superficial spreading melanoma (SSM)
- Nodular melanoma (NM)
- Lentigo maligna (LM) & lentigo maligna melanoma (LMM)
- Desmoplastic melanoma
- Acral lentiginous melanoma (ALM)
- Subungual melanoma
15% of melanomas present with an expansile nodule - features can be summarized using:

- Elevated
- Firm
- Growing
Beware the ugly duckling
Significant change over 3 months is the key

Melanomas either grow from preceding melanocytic lesions or grow as new lesions
2 Know when you can’t make a diagnosis

If you are not sure biopsy or refer

Err on the side of caution
3 Understand the important risk factors

Personal history of melanoma
Immediate family history of melanoma
Dysplastic naevus syndrome
Immunosuppression
History of numerous sunburns
4 Assess the individual

Some patients do know their skin
Others do not – these need a more paternalistic approach
5 Examine properly

Light, magnification

Entire skin surface
“A total of 94 melanomas were detected during this 12-month period. Of these, 57 (60.6%) were incidentally detected by the dermatologist.”

Cherian P; Tait C. 
Melanoma in private practice: do Dermatologists make a difference?.
6 Biopsy appropriately

Excisional biopsy with narrow margin

Large incisional biopsy if excision not possible

Shave biopsy in special circumstances
Do not punch biopsy

Melanocytic hyperplasia = melanoma
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