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Title: Empowering Patients: Leveraging the Untapped Potential of Smartphone Recordings in Dermatology Consultations.

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Dear editor,

During consultations, patients can be overwhelmed with new diagnoses, complex treatment plans and instructions, particularly when bad news is broken (such as a new skin cancer diagnosis). Patients may be unable to recall nuanced medical information and management details, particularly if elderly, attending on their own, with lower literacy, with impaired sensory abilities and where English may not be their native language.¹The ubiquity of smartphones, now owned by over 90% of Americans, ² makes it easy for patients to record consultations (with permission of their clinicians) especially where emotional reactions or an avalanche of information may interfere with their cognitive processing. By allowing patients to playback the recorded conversation at different times, and from the comfort of home, and shared with their relatives or caregivers, smartphone recordings can potentially improve information recall and understanding, reduce decisional regret and ensure personal engagement in decision-making. Hack and colleagues conducted a randomized trial of 628 women with newly diagnosed breast cancer and noted patients who had received audiotape of their primary adjuvant treatment consultation had significantly better recall of the discussed treatment side effects 12 weeks post-consultation than those who had not received the audiotape ($p=0.01$).³ This intervention was rated highly positive, with a mean audiotape favorableness rating of 83.9 of 100 amongst those who listened to at least a portion of audiotape (196 of 323 patients). In a different trial, Bruera et al.⁴ assessed the combined effect of adding audiocassette recording to written recommendations of outpatient consultation in 60 patients with advanced cancer, and found this simple non-time-consuming intervention significantly increase patient satisfaction (8.7 ± 1.7 vs. 7.7 ± 2.0 on a scale of 0 –10; $P = 0.04$) and improved patient recall, especially in sensitive areas such as drug treatments, even when written recommendations were

given ($88\% \pm 8.7\%$ vs. $80\% \pm 15.5\%$; $P = 0.02$). The patients reported high level of satisfaction and listened to the recording with a median of 2 (range 1–4) times whiles family/friends listened to the audiocassette a median of 2 (range 1–3) times. The main drawbacks of the audio recordings, include ethico-legal concerns as the law is inconsistent in different U.S. states⁵, as well as the risk of sharing recordings on social media or the potential for manipulation with the help of advanced AI technology.⁶ Despite this, we believe smartphone audio recordings of consultations afford a readily available aide memoire for patients and adjunct to clinical correspondence.

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