

# Medical Photography Guidelines 2006

## Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress

**If visible injuries are present, photography with digital, 35mm, specialized Polaroid, or video camera assists in documentation**

### GENERAL

- Each camera type has advantages and limitations.
  - Polaroid photos generally have poor color and preservation
  - Video should have no sound recording unless all parties are aware of and consent <sup>1</sup>
- Careful documentation with drawing is mandatory even when photographs are obtained
- Each institution should take appropriate steps to maintain the privacy and dignity of the patient in photos

#### **Always document name of photographer and date of photos**

- This may be done by documentation in the chart, in a photo log, or by writing the photographer name and date on the patient identification label which is then photographed

### TECHNIQUE

- Staff must be trained in specific camera and photography techniques
- If date function is used, verify that date is correct
- Check flash function: photos may be better either with or without flash
- First photo is of patient identification label
- One photo should include patient face

#### **Photograph each injury site 3 times**

- First, from at least 3 feet away, to demonstrate the injury in context
- Second, close up
- Third, close up with a measuring device (ruler, coin, or ABFO rule)

### BODY PHOTOS

#### **Photos of body injury are as significant as genital injury in sexual assault cases**

- Drape patient appropriately, photos may be shown in open court
- Hospital personnel may either take the photos or assist law enforcement in obtaining photos

### BITE MARKS

- Bite marks should be photographed, but police should be notified for police photographer to obtain technically optimal photos
- Use of a measuring device and good technique (camera perpendicular to plane of skin) is particularly important

### COLPOSCOPY

- Magnified photos of the genital or anal area can document injury
- Use photo or video colposcope, or camera with macro function
- Measuring device is not needed in these photos
- If blood or debris is present, photograph first, then clean area and photograph again
- If toluidine blue is used, photograph before and after dye application (see page 11)

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 9.73.030

## PHOTO STORAGE AND RELEASE

- Photos are part of the medical record
- Photos may be stored outside of the medical records department (just as x-ray films are stored in the radiology department)

### **Provide formal tracking of copies, release dates, and person responsible for releasing and receiving photos.**

- Follow HIPPA compliance policies for release of all records including photos
- Photos may be released to law enforcement with proper consents
- Follow medical records retention rules regarding disposal of photographs
- Because of the extremely confidential nature of colposcopy photos, these photos are not released like other portions of the medical record

***Colposcopy photos are released only in response to a subpoena and then are released directly to the medical expert who will review the photos***