

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 consent¹
- 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)

¹ 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