**Teledermatology service**

**Information for patients**

This leaflet answers common questions about the teledermatology service. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to speak to your nurse or doctor.

# What is teledermatology?

Teledermatology is the use of a special camera to take high quality photographs of skin when something unusual or new is seen for example a mole that is growing or bleeding. Your photographs will be reviewed by a consultant dermatologist (a doctor specialising in the study and treatment of skin conditions) and a decision made as to whether you will need to be seen at a clinic at one of our hospitals.

# Who can be referred?

Patients who have been initially seen by their GP and who are considered suitable for the service, can be referred to the teledermatology service.

# What are the benefits of this service?

If your skin does not require further investigation you will be informed of this without having to attend a hospital clinical appointment

If you need to be seen by a dermatologist, you will be contacted within a few days to arrange an appointment at Chapel Allerton Hospital.

# What happens at my GP appointment?

Your GP will ask for your consent to take three separate photographs of the area of concern on your skin, one to identify the area of the body and two more close up photographs to provide enough detail for the doctor to make a decision on next steps.

Your GP will send the photographs and your referral electronically via a secure link to the dermatology department at Chapel Allerton Hospital. The GP will make a record in your notes that you have given consent to have the photographs taken.

If you decide that you do not want photographs taken then your GP will refer directly to the hospital and you will be contacted to arrange a clinic appointment.

# What happens after my GP appointment?

Your photographs will be carefully assessed by a consultant dermatologist within 48 hours of receiving them. A decision will then be made whether you need to be seen in the clinic at the hospital.

For some patients, the doctor will be able to make a diagnosis from the photograph, provide reassurance and discharge you back to your GP with a plan for looking after your condition.

Sometimes, the consultant may decide that you do need to be seen in person or that you need a biopsy (a small piece of skin is taken and sent to a laboratory for diagnosis). If this is the case, you will be contacted and offered an appointment at Chapel Allerton Hospital. If you need to be seen quickly, the doctor will arrange for this to take place and you will be contacted with further information.

The consultant dermatologist who reviews your photographs will write to you and your GP with the decision so you are always kept up to date with what is happening with your care. This will usually be within ten days of having the photographs taken.

# Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

**Q. How are my photographs processed?**

A. When the photographs are taken they are sent directly to a secure cloud via the internet. The cloud is managed by Consultant Connect Ltd and conforms to all NHS requirements for protecting your data. Your photographs on the cloud are linked to your NHS Number.

The practice administrator will access these photographs via a secure log in and they will be uploaded in to your electronically held patient record in the practice clinical system. The photographs will then be attached to your referral and sent electronically to the dermatology department at Chapel Allerton Hospital, along with a brief history of your skin condition. The photographs will then be deleted from the Cloud once the referral has been sent.

Your photographs will be seen by one of the expert consultant dermatologists at Chapel Allerton Hospital.

The lawful purpose of processing your photographs is for medical diagnosis. (General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 Article 6(I) and Article 9(2)h)

**Q. What does giving my consent mean?**

**A.** In giving your consent to having the photographs taken by your GP you are saying that you understand and agree to the purpose of taking the photographs, what photographs will be taken and that they will be linked to your NHS number, how they will be used, who will have access to them and how they will be stored.

You can remove consent for the use and storage of your photograph prior to the referral to the hospital, however once the referral has been made to the Hospital your photographs will remain part of your permanent clinical record and cannot be removed. Your photographs will be stored by your GP surgery and Leeds Teaching Hospitals in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

**Q. Does the consultant dermatologist have to see me in person in order to identify what is wrong?**

**A.** No. The photographs are high quality. However, if the consultant has any uncertainty about the diagnosis, they will ask to see you in a face to face consultation.

**Q. How Quickly Can I Expect a Response?**

**A.** The consultant dermatologist will review your photographs within 2 working days. If you need to be seen in clinic, you will be contacted a couple of days after this by phone to make an appointment. If the dermatologist does not need to see you then your GP will be informed and you will be sent a letter. This letter may take a few weeks to arrive.

**Q. Will I still need to go to Hospital?**

**A.** You will only need to go to hospital if the consultant dermatologist decides you need to be seen in person to assess your skin condition further.

**Q. What Will Happen If I Need to Go to the Hospital?**

**A.** Please don’t be alarmed if you are asked to come to the hospital. On most occasions, it simply means that the consultant dermatologist was not able to make a diagnosis from the photographs alone and has requested to see you.

We will contact you by telephone to offer you an appointment. The phone number for the hospital ends in 999 so please answer the call even if you do not recognise the number

Occasionally, a skin biopsy is needed. This is done under local anaesthetic (you are awake during the procedure) where a sample of the skin is taken away and looked at under a microscope to make a diagnosis. This often happens on the day of your appointment at the hospital.

**Q. What Will Happen If I do not need to go to the Hospital?**

1. You will receive a copy of the consultant’s letter, which will explain what action, if any, you need to take next.
	1. It may be that you will be managed by your GP. If this is the case it will be clearly written in the letter. It is very important that if the letter says this, you call your GP practice and make the appointment so that your treatment, if any, can be started.
	2. It could be that there is no further action needed and in which case you only need to go back and see your GP if you are worried or if there are any further changes in your skin condition.

**Q. Is this a safe service?**

**A.** Yes, this service is safe. It is already provided in many areas of the country and is an excellent way of helping patients be seen more quickly than at present without losing any quality in the care received.

**Q. Who Do I Contact In Case I Have Any Questions?**

**A.** In the first instance, please contact your doctor’s surgery if you have any questions.

**Q. How can I access my photographs or raise concerns about the processing of my data**

**A.** You can write to the Data Protection Officer at your surgery.