Non-invasive imaging of actinic cheilitis and squamous cell carcinoma of the lip.

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ABSTRACT
An early diagnosis is of overwhelming importance for the management and prognosis of mucocutaneous cancer. Actinic cheilitis (AC), defined by the clonal expansion of genomically unstable keratinocytes, is the most common potentially malignant lesion affecting the lips. Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is the most frequent oral malignancy, and there is strong evidence that the majority of the SCCs of the lip originate from AC. There is considerable difficulty in discerning between dysplasia and invasive carcinomas solely on a clinical basis. Although dermoscopy has become an essential tool for skin tumor evaluation, reflectance confocal microscopy (RCM) is a non-invasive imaging technology that has proved itself extremely useful in the diagnosis and monitoring of several skin diseases, including AC and SCC. The present study aimed to re-emphasize the usefulness of RCM in the early detection of malignant transformation, using AC and SCC of the lips as working examples. Due to the apparent innocuousness of AC for numerous patients, it is not possible to overstress the importance of a correct and early diagnosis, proper treatment and long-term patient follow-up as being essential for preventing the progression to lip SCC, or for its timely diagnosis. KEYWORDS: actinic cheilitis; confocal; dermoscopy; early detection of cancer; lip neoplasms; microscopy; squamous cell carcinoma
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