

# Book Review

## Teledermatology

Edited by Richard Wootton and Amanda Oakley  
©2002, Royal Society of Medicine, London, England. 331 pages.

A review by Noah S. Scheinfeld, MD, JD

**T**eledermatology has yet to catch on beyond demonstration projects and the provision of prison and military medical care. Concordance of live and remote diagnosis is high (80%–100%), but payment for storing patient images and forwarding still images to dermatologists remains limited by Medicare to cases in Alaska and Hawaii and by private insurers to some of the plans for follow-up visits in California. The fundamental questions about ease of use, teledermatology system use, and image standardization remain unaddressed. Finally, the privacy requirements of the Health Information Privacy and Accountability Act regarding digital medical data interaction with the use of patient images and data in teledermatology have yet to be explicated.

*Teledermatology* suggests that, perhaps, the time of ubiquity for teledermatology is at hand. Wootton and Oakley have provided a comprehensive book on teledermatology: that disseminates technical advice, particularly in digital imaging. The authors also address the global experience of consultations and diagnoses with country-specific case studies; patient education; and management, including military, social services,

and prison teledermatology. In addition, the book provides on-line resources, automated melanoma diagnosis, mobile teledermatology, wound healing informatics, and teledermatology economics. One interesting chapter deals with Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine (DICOM)—a standardized means of dealing with images most used by radiologists. DICOM is a system that has not yet found a place in dermatology.

*Teledermatology* is certainly the place to start for those interested in teledermatology or for those thinking about implementing a teledermatology system. The book does not provide the technical know-how to establish a database that will accommodate thousands of images but instead furnishes the techniques, forms, and formats others have used. Those who desire a system more sophisticated than digital images attached to e-mail will require expert knowledge and/or assistance regarding computers. Wootton, Oakley, and their coauthors have done a great service with *Teledermatology*. I hope this is the first edition of a book that chronicles the future expansion and triumph of teledermatology as a means of providing and enhancing patient care.