

Press Release

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MEDICAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO: ESSENTIALS COMPONENTS OF MEDICAL FILE, CLINICAL CARE, TEACHING AND RESEARCH

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In the era of digital health, "medical photography (and video)" is still not explicitly included in the institutional lists describing the composition of a patient's medical file. Yet, it is essential, used on a daily basis and recommended in many medical specialties and/or situations. It is an essential tool for diagnosis, monitoring, and coordination of care, remote review, and forensic documentation.

This report specifies its status, organization, use, and security. The sources included the recommendations indicating to take photographs (HAS, CCAM, learned societies, etc.).

There is great deal of organizational diversity linked to the decline in the number of photo laboratories, medical photographers and/or specialised staff, the massive use of smartphones, the fragmentation of data and the lack of integration into the computerized patient files.

The solutions depend on the volume of care and the care protocols and, depending on the circumstances, rely on dedicated cameras, specialised laboratories, trained specialists, including medical photographers, and integration with the hospital information system, as well as secure and certified applications.

Photographs must be recognized as medical data, subject to the same rules as other digital health data. Their security and enhancement require the commitment of institutions and hospital management to guarantee quality, traceability, certified storage, and regulatory compliance.

The educational value of medical photography (and video) is widely recognised. Its use in teaching and research requires adherence to certain rules, which must be understood and observed. These factors highlight the urgent need for a coordinated institutional response.

The clinical value of photography depends on its technical quality and requires training for practitioners; in certain specialities, it also necessitates the use of a laboratory and a medical photographer. Recognising the value of this medical procedure is becoming essential.

The use of photographs in teaching and research raises questions about image rights. AI offers new possibilities for creating clinical case studies and mitigating the legal risks associated with the use of images from patient file.

All these requirements have shaped the seven recommendations put forward by the French National Academy of Medicine:

1. Official recognition of medical photography (and video) as an integral part of the medical file by the Public Health Code, the High Authority for Health, the National Health Insurance Fund and all health organisations.
2. Application of standard rules governing digital health data regarding collection, consent, confidentiality, storage, access and dissemination.
3. Provision of appropriate human and technical resources.
4. Institutional recognition.
5. Recognition of medical photograph profession and inclusion in the National Register of Health and Care Professions.
6. Inclusion of specific training in the curriculum for medical and dental students.
7. Guidelines for the use in teaching and research purposes through strict and clearly defined procedures.

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