

Conference Abstract

London Global Cancer Week 2025

24 - 28 Nov 2025

London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Transforming Skin Care in Radiotherapy: An Inclusive Image Library for Equitable Assessment and Management

21 Feb 2026

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Background

Radiation-Induced Skin Reactions (are common side effects for patients undergoing external beam radiotherapy, particularly in anatomically sensitive regions such as the head and neck. These reactions may include pigmentation changes, tightness, oedema, and discomfort, which can persist and negatively impact quality of life. However, current oncology education and clinical language predominantly describe RISR in relation to white skin tones, and often fails to reflect how RISR presents in patients with brown and black skin tones. The lack of diverse medical imagery limits clinicians' ability to effectively assess and manage RISR in patients of colour.

Methods

To address this gap, a public and patient involvement (PPI) group was formed, comprising representatives from marginalised groups. The group collaborated to support in crowdsourcing a diverse, open-access oncology image library featuring skin reactions in people of colour. The library was developed by healthcare professionals and offers free, continuing professional development (CPD) resources.

Results

Use of the inclusive image library led to increased confidence among oncology professionals in recognising and responding to RISR in patients with diverse skin tones. Clinicians reported an improved ability to assess and manage skincare-related side effects appropriately, enhancing both the accuracy of diagnosis and the quality of patient support offered.

Conclusion

Access to a free, diverse, and medically verified image resource significantly improves the ability of oncology healthcare professionals. This initiative contributes to addressing racial disparities in cancer care and fosters a more equitable healthcare environment for patients of colour undergoing radiotherapy.

References

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