

### Introduction

Welcome to the Image Guidance Document for RCEMLearning. In the realm of medical education, images play a pivotal role in conveying complex concepts, facilitating learning, and enhancing understanding. However, using images has inherent responsibilities, particularly concerning consent and copyright. This document aims to provide clear guidance on the appropriate use of images, obtaining consent for their use, and navigating copyright issues within the context of RCEMLearning. By adhering to these guidelines, we ensure not only compliance with legal and ethical standards but also uphold the integrity and professionalism of our educational resources.

### Image Use Advice

Please try to provide informative and relevant photographs or images (where relevant) when submitting content to RCEMLearning. We believe that using images helps to support the users' understanding of the scenario and helps lift the content to make it even more engaging.

You can use images that you have taken yourself; if you do so then you will need to obtain patient consent – please read our image consent guidance and image content form.

If you need to source an image you can look at the following resources and see if there are any applicable images that we can use – images used must be copyright-free.

List of image resources:

ECGs - <https://litfl.com/ecg-library/>

X-Rays - <https://radiopaedia.org/?lang=gb>

Medical images - <https://medpix.nlm.nih.gov/home>

Scientific photos, illustrations and videos - <https://images.nigms.nih.gov/>

Open wounds and surgical wound dressings - <http://www.medetec.co.uk/files/medetec-image-databases.html>

Anatomy of the Human Body - <https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/anatomy-of-the-human-body/>

Wikimedia - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Images?uselang=en-gb>

Conditions on varying skin colours - <https://www.blackandbrownskin.co.uk/> & <https://dftbskindeep.com/>

Smart Server Medical Art - <https://smart.servier.com/>

## Image Consent Guidance

If you are using an image of a patient then you must seek the patient's written consent to publication for RCEMLearning if there is any chance that they may be identified from a picture, its legend or other accompanying text. We no longer publish pictures with black bands across the eyes because bands fail to mask someone's identity effectively.

The patient will need to understand and sign an appropriate consent form (RCEMLearning image form or an alternative image form that is similar – for example, the BMJ image form is also acceptable to us) which details what the image will be used for. Please print out the form, fill in the details and ensure that you explain the use to which the image(s) will be put. Ask the patient or next of kin to sign the form, and then send it to us along with your learning content submission.

### What Happens if the Patient Can't Consent

In some cases, patients may not be able to provide consent for the use of their images due to various reasons such as unconsciousness, cognitive impairment, or being a minor. In such situations, it's crucial to uphold ethical standards while still considering the educational value of the content. Below are the steps to follow if the patient is unable to provide consent:

*Assess the Patient's Capacity:* Before proceeding with the use of the image, assess the patient's capacity to provide consent. If the patient lacks decision-making capacity due to factors such as unconsciousness or cognitive impairment, proceed to the next steps.

*Seek Proxy Consent:* If the patient lacks capacity, seek consent from a legally authorised representative, such as a family member, legal guardian, or healthcare proxy. This individual should have the authority to make healthcare decisions on behalf of the patient.

*Document the Decision-Making Process:* Document the decision-making process, including the reasons why the patient cannot provide consent and the justification for seeking proxy consent. This documentation is important for transparency and accountability.

*Consider the Best Interest of the Patient:* When seeking proxy consent, prioritise the best interest of the patient. Consider whether the use of the image is necessary for educational purposes and whether it aligns with the patient's known preferences and values.

*Respect Privacy and Dignity:* Regardless of the circumstances, always respect the privacy and dignity of the patient. Avoid using images that could be considered sensitive or invasive without explicit consent or a clear justification for their educational value.

*Alternative Educational Materials:* If obtaining consent is not possible or appropriate, consider using alternative educational materials that do not involve the use of patient images. There may be other ways to convey the necessary information effectively while respecting patient autonomy and privacy.

By following these steps and considering the ethical implications, we can navigate situations where patients are unable to provide consent for the use of their images in educational materials. Prioritising patient welfare and respecting their autonomy remains paramount, even in challenging circumstances.

Our policy on obtaining consent for the publication of images of patients is a subset of our general policy on any confidential material that arises from the doctor-patient relationship. This policy also reflects the UK General Medical Council's rules on publishing confidential clinical material. However, the GMC does not insist on separate permission to publish what the GMC calls the "recordings" listed below, provided that, before use, the recordings are effectively anonymised by the removal of any identifying marks. Please remove details such as patients' names and dates of birth from images before sending them to us. The GMC's list includes:

- Images taken from pathology slides.
- X rays.
- Laparoscopic images.
- Images of internal organs.
- Ultrasound images

When such an image is accompanied by text that could reveal the patient's identity through clinical or personal detail, however, RCEMLearning does need the patient's signed consent to publication. If the patient could identify themselves from the text, then this is sufficient to require consent. Please use an appropriate consent form for any image that does need consent to publish or, indeed, for the text of any content that might lead to identification. Please print out the form, ask the patient or next of kin to sign the form and then send it to us along with your learning content submission.

## **Image copyright**

We can use an image that has been published before only if it has no copyright or if the copyright holder has given us permission for its use on RCEMLearning.

If an image has no copyright, please tell us the precise details of where you obtained it and who permitted you to use it for RCEMLearning. Please note that many medical image providers expect to be acknowledged. If images have come from your colleagues, you will need to seek their written permission and check whether the images have been published previously elsewhere.

Supply your own images:

If you have found or produced pictures or other figures to illustrate your content, please include them with your submission.

Image sizes/quality should be .jpg or .png files, the size can vary. The Pixels per inch (PPI) should be above 72 and the image size above 800px wide.

We will not change any feature, person, or situation in an image with the intent to deceive by altering appearance or activity. Nor will we enhance or alter a clinical picture except to remove extraneous and distracting parts of the image.

We do sometimes alter non-clinical images, and our guidelines on this are listed below. And, very occasionally, we alter clinical images that we are using primarily as art rather than information, for example on the landing page of the website and for social media channels.

Why we sometimes alter images:

- To enhance colour, sharpness, and texture without altering the intention or meaning of the image.
- To enhance text within the image to make it readable.
- To remove irrelevant text from an image that confuses the view or meaning of the image.
- To remove irrelevant features that detract from the image such as an arm appearing at the side of the photo or a lamp post apparently coming out of someone's head.
- To delete one or more people from the background if their presence is irrelevant.
- To construct any collage from images that we have permission to use in that way.