# Clinical Photography Guidelines

**Title**: Clinical Photography Guidelines  
**Trust Ref No**: 663-31944  
**Local Ref (optional)**: Clinical Photography Guidelines V2

**Main points the document covers**: Guidance on undertaking clinical photography, to support the delivery of care, in a safe, secure and confidential manner.

**Who is the document aimed at?**: All healthcare professionals undertaking clinical photography.

**Owner(s)**: Joy Tickle, Tissue Viability Nurse Specialist and Alan Ferguson, Records Manager and Quality Facilitator.

**Approved by (Committee/Director)**: Clinical Policies Group

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**Sub Category**: Policies relevant to all services

**Review date**: 18/4/19

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**Who the policy will be distributed to**: Directors, Divisional Managers, Service Leads for dissemination to relevant staff within their areas

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**Document Links**

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**Other**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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1 **Introduction**

Clinical photography and video recordings are a valuable part of assessing and evidencing a patient’s condition. In particular in tissue viability, the digital photography of a patient’s wounds is an essential technique used to assess healing. The value of clinical photography in wound management lies in the ability to achieve repeated views over time, adding objective visual confirmation to the written record and can provide evidence of rates of healing, capturing therapeutic efficacy. They are also beneficial in Allied Health Professional (AHP) areas to demonstrate improvements of a particular condition over time.

Clinical photographs are confidential medical records which may contain sensitive personal information. They should be treated with the same care as written medical notes/records.

2 **Purpose**

To give guidance to all staff to ensure that clinical photography undertaken to support the care of a patient is carried out in a safe, secure and confidential means. These guidelines primarily covers guidance on clinical photography relating to digital images supporting the wound management process but the basic concepts covered are still appropriate to any other type of clinical photography, both stills and video.

3 **Definitions**

For the purposes of these guidelines the following definitions apply:

3.1 **Clinical Photography**

Clinical photography is defined as stills or video photography undertaken by clinical staff to support the care and treatment of a patient.

3.2 **Medical Photography**

Medical photography is defined as stills or moving images taken by professional medical photographers. Guidance on this type of photography is covered by the medical photographer’s professional codes of practice (e.g. Institute of Medical Illustrators National Guidelines)

3.3 **Recordings**

The term “recording” (or “recordings”) is used to refer to photography (either conventional or digital) and video recordings (either conventional or digital) a. It refers to original and/or copies of images. It does not include pathology slides containing human tissue or Close Circuit Television (CCTV) recordings of public areas on the organisations premises.

4 **Duties**

These guidelines apply to all staff employed by Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust (SCHT) when undertaking clinical photography.

4.1 **Tissue Viability Nurse Specialist**

Tissue Viability Nurse Specialist is responsible for:

a) giving advice and guidance to staff on the use of wound photography;
b) making a clinical decision whether digital photographs need to be retained for a specific period of time; and

c) reviewing the Clinical Photography Guidelines.

4.2 Clinical Staff

All clinical staff are responsible for:

a) assessing when a clinical photograph is required;

b) obtaining and recording appropriate consent from the patient;

c) ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the confidentiality and security of the photographs. Where there is a need to send a photograph to another healthcare professional, the Trust guidelines in the secure sending of images must be adhered to.

5 Consent and Confidentiality

Photographic and video recordings which are made for treating or assessing a patient must not be used for any purpose other than the patient’s care or the audit of that care, without the express consent of the patient or a person with parental responsibility for the patient. For full guidance on consent refer to the Trust’s Consent to Examination and Treatment Policy.

A key point relating to clinical photography is to ensure consent is obtained from patients prior to taking any clinical photographs using the appropriate consent form which are available as part of the Trust’s clinical documentation (see Appendix 1: Consent Form 5, Consent to photograph / Video recording and Appendix 2: Wound Photography Consent Form for examples of these forms). If the patient is unable to give written consent this should be noted in the records using the appropriate Photographic Consent forms.

Remember, clinical photographs are confidential medical records which may contain sensitive personal information. They should be treated with the same care as written medical notes.

6 Quality of Clinical Photography

It is the healthcare professional’s responsibility to decide when it is appropriate to undertake clinical photography and in addition to consent the clinician must consider the quality of the image produced. The resulting image must be of sufficient quality to access the clinical condition being reviewed, e.g. photographing of the wounds will allow the clinician to:

a) monitor wound healing progress or deterioration;

b) provide a record of the healing process; and

c) may be used as a method of gaining specialist advice regarding the patient’s condition and wound status.

The following points need to be considered:

a) Image quality of the camera being used: on the whole a dedicated digital camera will give a better quality image than a mobile phone as it has additional features such as image quality settings, flash and close up functions. It is acknowledged that the improved technology of mobile
smartphones means that these will give sufficient quality for certain clinical purposes e.g. review of wounds with specialist staff.

b) **Focus:** to ensure a clear sharp image ensure that the item being photographed is within the focus range of the camera. With small items it may be necessary to use close up functions. In most digital cameras taking the first pressure on the shutter release button confirms focusing.

c) **Camera stability:** particularly in low light conditions care must be taken to ensure the image is not blurred because of camera shake. Hold the camera steady and squeeze the shutter release button to release it. Consider using flash in low light conditions but be aware of any reflections that might obscure parts of the image. Also consider the use of a tripod where it is appropriate.

For guidance on photography see Appendix 3: Digital Photography Handy Tips

7 **Video Recording**

The concepts of consent, confidentiality and quality relating to stills photography apply to any video photography but any clinician undertaking video clinical photography must consider some additional aspects.

7.1 **Individual Video Sessions**

Where there is a requirement to record aspects a patient’s care, the reason for the recording must be discussed beforehand and informed consent obtained to whether the recording will be:

1. Retained as part of the patient’s record or,
2. As a one off recording to access a particular aspect of their treatment and deleted on completion of the process.

**Note:** If the recording is to be kept as part of the patient record it must be documented in the patient’s record and appropriately labelled and included securely within the record. If the recording cannot be kept within the record the secure location of the recording must be clearly documented in the patient record.

7.2 **Group Video Sessions**

In some clinical situations it may be required to video a patient’s interaction with other patients / people in a group environment. In these situations informed consent of all those involved in that group session must be obtained and the reason for the recording clearly documented. In these cases it is most likely that the recordings will be reviewed by the clinicians after the session in order to make detailed notes. The recording should be deleted once that process is complete. If there is a requirement to retain the recording this must be agreed by all involved in the group session and the recording stored in a secure location and documented in the patient’s records.

8 **Photographic Equipment**

Only digital cameras/mobile smartphones supplied by the Trust should be used and the batteries should be checked regularly. The practitioner should also ensure that the correct date and time is set on the camera/device. The camera/device
must be cleaned with appropriate multi-surface wipes to prevent cross infection between patients.

The digital camera should be transported in a secure case or bag in the boot of a car as per the Trust’s Information Security Policy.

9 Taking of the Photograph

When taking photographs consideration must be given at all times to protect the patient’s identity within the photograph itself. Care must be taken to respect the dignity, ethnicity and religious beliefs of the patient. The patient’s modesty must also be maintained by ensuring minimal patient skin exposure. The digital camera should be pre set to record the date and time so that this is correctly recorded when the image is taken.

9.1 Lighting and Background

It is important to consider the lighting available to ensure sufficient detail of the wound can be recorded in the final image. The background should be plain and neutral.

9.2 Position of the Patient

It may be easier to photograph the patient lying down because some wounds (particularly those on the buttocks) distort easily. Additionally, the natural curvature of the patient’s body can also cause a problem especially where wounds extend around a limb e.g. pressure ulcers on a heel. It may be helpful to photograph such wounds in a “relaxed” position and then again with the assistance of a helper. The patients should be in a comfortable position and the camera should be held perpendicular to the wound. Avoid including any hands in the image wherever possible.

9.3 Scale

Disposable paper rulers must be used to give an impression of scale and the extent of a wound. It should be noted that wound measurement using digital photography is not sufficient enough to be used as a basis for accurate measuring of wounds. A printable page of wound measuring rulers is included in Appendix 5.

9.4 Patient Identification

To aid identification use a pseudonymised reference to identify the patient, e.g. the initials of the patient and the last four digits of their NHS number. AB 0123. No personal identifiable information should be included in the photograph.
10 Downloading and Printing of Images
Digital images should be transferred from the camera/device to a Trust computer as soon as possible, and deleted from the camera/device on completion of transfer.

Note: Any printed photographs should have the patient’s First Name, Last Name, NHS number and Date of Birth printed onto the photograph and signed by the clinician, including their printed name, designation, date and time.

Under normal circumstances it is recommended that once the image has been printed off and placed in the patient’s records the downloaded image can then be securely deleted. If, in complex wound cases, it is agreed by the specialist nurse that the images need to be retained for a period of time these should be stored in a secure location with the folder clearly identifiable as the patient (the use of name and NHS Number is recommended). On completion of the treatment of the complex wound the folder and images can be deleted having first ensured that master copies have been printed off and are stored with the patient’s records.

11 Uploading Images to the Datix Incident Reporting System
When a digital image is required to support an incident reported on the Trust’s Incident Reporting system, Datix it can be uploaded to be included in the actual incident report. This is stored within a secure environment and will mean it is available to anyone involved in investigating the incident e.g. carrying out a Root Cause analysis. Instructions can be found in Appendix 4: Attaching a Photograph to an Incident Report in Datix

12 Sending of Wound Photographs/Images
Any photographs / images sent for specialist advice should be sent via a secure means e.g. from a Trust computer to a second secure Trust computer using secure (encrypted) e-mail and should only contain identifiable data in a pseudonymised way. This could include the initials of the patient and the last four digits of their NHS number. Please ensure that the image being sent is being sent to the correct person and that, when sent successfully, is deleted from the device.

Images can be sent securely via e-mail using the Trust’s mobile smartphones (e.g. HTC Desire 620/626).

When sending an e-mail via these mobile smartphones you must encrypt a message by including in the message header:

- [Send Secure] when using a shropcom.nhs.uk e-mail account or
- [Secure] when using an NHS.net Mail e-mail account.

See Appendix 6 for simple guidance on sending a photograph via the Trust’s HTC Desire 620/626 Smartphones
13 **Storage of the Photographs/Images**

A copy of all photographs/images must be kept in the patient’s records and, if applicable, stored in a secure folder on a Trust computer / network server location. As with the rest of a patient’s records, photographs are also subject to The Data Protection Act 1998 and must be available for disclosure in response to any request made by or on behalf of the patient.

14 **Disposal**

Unless there is a clinical reason for retaining the digital image and a print is placed on the patient’s record¹, there is no requirement to retain the digital image. Images should be deleted from camera/devices as soon as they have been transferred/printed. The patient record should be retained for the period of time appropriate to the patient/specialty. Refer to the Trust’s Records Retention, Archiving and Disposal Policy for more details.

15 **Advice and Guidance**

For any advice/guidance regarding wound care photography please contact the Tissue Viability Service on 01952 607710, fax 01952 607711 or email tissueviability@nhs.net.

16 **Consultation**

In the development of this guidance the following have been included in the consultation process:

- Tissue Viability Link Nurses
- Angela Cook, Head of Nursing and Quality
- George English, Clinical Lead for Community Nursing
- Claire Wheeler, Community Practice Teacher
- Louise Gregory, Tissue Viability Technician
- Katherine Ball, Tissue Viability Nurse
- Gill Richards, Information Governance Manager
- Dave Pugh, IT Engineer
- Kitty Rowley, Information Technician

17 **Dissemination and Implementation**

These guidelines will be disseminated to all relevant clinical teams by:

- Managers informed via DATIX system who then confirm they have disseminated to staff as appropriate
- Staff via Team Brief
- Via Tissue Viability Link Nurses
- Published to the staff zone of the trust website

Training and awareness raising will be included as part of the Wound Assessment and Management Study Seminars delivered by the Tissue Viability Service.

18 Monitoring Compliance
Tissue Viability Clinical Lead and team leaders will monitor compliance of these guidelines by:
   a) Clinical audits, including clinical record keeping audit and wound care audit.
   b) Responding to any incidents reported on the Trust incident reporting system and ensuring appropriate lessons learnt are identified and action plans implemented and completed.
   c) Monitor feedback from clinical staff and that any concerns raised are addressed.

19 References
   • Institute of Medical Illustrators (IMI) National Guidelines (March 2007) Clinical Photography in Wound Management
   • Photography in wound assessment: Journal of Wound Care 4:7, Bellamy K. 1995
   • Telemedicine: an innovative way of managing patients with leg ulcers, Samad, A. et al. British Journal of Nursing; 11.6, (Supl) S38-S52 (March 2002)

20 Associated Documents
The following Trust policies should be read in conjunction with these guidelines:
   • Consent to Examination or Treatment Policy
   • Confidentiality Code of Practice
   • Information Security Policy
   • Incident Reporting Policy
   • Data Protection Policy
   • Records Management Policy
   • Clinical Record Keeping Policy
   • NHS Number Retrieval, Verification and Use Procedure
   • Records Retention, Archiving and Disposal Policy

These policies can be found in the Policy section of the Trust’s website:
http://www.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk/rte.asp?id=10667
Appendix 1: Consent to photograph / Video recording

Consent Form 5

Consent to photograph / video recording

I give my permission for a photograph* / video* of:

Name: ....................................................... Date of Birth: ..............

Address: ........................................................................

........................................................................

........................................................................

Telephone Number: ....................................................

to be taken and used for assessment* / examination* / treatment* / display* / publication* / training* / research* purpose(s) (* Please delete as appropriate)

The use of this photograph / video has been fully explained to me.

I consent for this photograph / video to be used indefinitely* / or until expiry date: ............ (* Please delete as appropriate)

I understand that when the photograph / video reaches its expiry date it will be destroyed and no longer used.

However I understand that it may not be possible to destroy or withdraw those recordings that I have consented to be used and held in the public domain.

When the photograph / video is kept as part of the clinical record, it will be stored in a secure area in accordance with the Trust’s Clinical Record Keeping Policy

I am the Patient* / Person with parental responsibility* (* Please delete as appropriate)

Signature: ....................................................... Date: ..............................

Name: (PRINT) ........................................................................

Statement of health professional (to be filled in by health professional photographing or videoing the patient)

I have explained each individual section outlined in the Trust’s Policy for Consent to Examination or Treatment to the patient and they understand the whole procedure.

Signature of health professional

Signature: ....................................................... Date: ..............................

Name: (PRINT) ............................................................... Job title: ..............................

TO BE RETAINED IN THE PATIENT’S NOTES
## Appendix 2: Wound Photography Consent Form

| First Name: ___________________________ |
| Last Name: ___________________________ |
| Date of Birth: ________________________ |
| NHS Number: __________________________ |

**Wound Photography Consent Form**

*(To be completed prior to photographing each wound care episode)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wound Site(s):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Statement of Patient**

1. The reason for taking a photograph has been explained: **Yes □ / No □**
2. I agree to a photographic record as part of the Community Nursing Care Plan: **Yes □ / No □**
3. I give permission for the photographs to be used for educational purposes and understand my name will not be used: **Yes □ / No □**
4. I am aware that the photographs are the property of Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust: **Yes □ / No □**

I am the Patient*/Person with parental responsibility* *(delete as appropriate)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name: (PRINT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statement of Healthcare Professional**

I have explained the reason for taking a photograph of the wound(s) and that this will be shared with healthcare professionals involved in the care of the patient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name: (PRINT)</td>
<td>Designation:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Digital Photography Handy Tips

Reading the Camera Instructions will help to understand the features available but that can sometimes be quite confusing so the following are considered to be key points to consider and be aware of in order to improve your digital photography techniques. The camera below is a Nikon Coolpix which is issued to a number of teams but the basic concepts apply to most digital camera.

**Camera Stability:** It is important that you hold the camera securely to ensure you do not blur the image by getting camera shake. Hold the camera firmly as shown below, ensuring your fingers and camera strap do not cover the lens.

The finger by the shutter release button can also operate the Zoom control.

When you have framed up your photograph it is important that you do not “stab” the shutter release button with your finger but gently squeeze.

### The Shutter-release Button

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Press halfway</th>
<th>To set focus and exposure (shutter speed and aperture value), press the shutter-release button halfway, stopping when you feel resistance. Focus and exposure remain locked while the shutter-release button is pressed halfway.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press all the way</td>
<td>While pressing the shutter-release button halfway, press the shutter-release button the rest of the way down to release the shutter and take a picture. Do not use force when pressing the shutter-release button, as this may result in camera shake and blurred images. Press the button gently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Multi Selector Control:** Most cameras have a control similar to this where you can select commonly used functions such as Flash Mode; Self Timer; Exposure Compensation; and the Macro Mode.
Focus and Macro Mode: It is important to ensure the camera is able to focus and that the item you are photographing is not too close. If you need the camera to focus on a small item you may have to use the “Close-up / Macro Mode”. This can be activated by using the Multi-select button. When selected you can use the Multi Selector up and down button to select the option display on the screen e.g. Macro Mode on or Off.

Flash Mode: sometimes there the light level may be too low and there is a risk of camera shake because of low shutter speed being used. In these cases the Auto Flash mode will usually operate. In some instances there may be harsh shadows covering the area you want to photograph. You can use “Fill Flash” function to operate the flash and fill in the shadow. This feature can again be selected by using the Multi Selector button. You can then use the Multi Selector up and down button to select the appropriate flash mode required. The “Fill Flash” mode the single lightning symbol.

*Remember if all else fails then refer to the Instruction Manual.
Appendix 4: Attaching a Photograph to an Incident Report in Datix

After taking connecting your digital camera to your computer, open up the relevant incident on Datix

- Select Documents from the list on the lefthand side and then choose “Attach a new document”

From the New Document page

- Select an option from the “Link as” dropdown list
- Type in a brief description for the photograph in the “Description” field
- Click on the “Browse” button and navigate to the photograph e.g. to the camera used as in example opposite
- Click on the photograph to select it and click “Open”
- The path for the image will now appear in the “Insert this File” field
- Select “Save” to add the photograph to the incident report

The image is now linked to the Datix Incident report and can be accessed from there.

Note: a print of the photograph should be printed off and placed in the patient's record.

Once the image has been uploaded to Datix and / or printed ensure you now delete the photograph from the camera.
Appendix 5: Wound Measuring Guide

Patient’s Identification: ____________________ Date: ____ / ____ / ________

(Initials and last four of their NHS Number)

Wound Measuring Guide

Version 2 - Feb 2015

for single use only

mm cm

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Clinical Photography Guidelines V2.1 Datix Ref: 663-31944 April 2016
Appendix 6: Guidance on sending a photograph via the Trust’s HTC Desire 620/626 Smartphones

1. Take the photograph including a Wound Measuring Guide with the pseudonymised reference to identify the patient e.g. patient initials and last four of their NHS number – AB1234

2. From the Camera mode click on the thumbnail image in bottom righthand corner to open up the photograph album (Camera Shots)

3. Tap the screen to bring up menu options and select the Share option and Mail to open up a new message with the photograph attached (note: you may have to select the More option in Share the first time and select mail from an extended list. After that the Mail option should be in the first list).

4. Select the address you want to send the photograph to. Ensure you double check to ensure it is the correct address.

5. To encrypt the message, type in [Send secure] if using a shropcom.nhs.uk e-mail account or [Secure] if using an NHS.Net Mail e-mail account

6. Only use the pseudonymised patient identifier in the message header to identify the patient concerned

7. Ensure you include your contact details in the message so that the Tissue Viability Team know who has send the message and can get in touch with you if required.

Regard,
Sam Browne, Staff Nurse
South Telford Community Nursing
Tel: 01952 643177