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### Teledermatology etiquette and the hijab: recommendations for culturally sensitive care

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# Correspondence

## Teledermatology etiquette and the hijab: recommendations for culturally sensitive care

Dear Editor,

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, teledermatology is becoming a popular option to avoid viral transmission and expand care to groups that may have had decreased access to dermatologic care through remote consultation.<sup>1,2</sup> Technological advancements have made it convenient for physicians to remotely monitor, diagnose, and treat patients.<sup>3</sup> During teledermatology visits, it is necessary to keep special considerations in mind while caring for certain patient populations in order to provide culturally sensitive care. An example would be Muslim women who wear the hijab to cover their hair and body to preserve modesty.<sup>4</sup> Patients may feel uncomfortable while videoconferencing out of concern for network security or for fear of being on camera, which may deter patients from receiving care remotely. Here, we provide culturally sensitive recommendations to improve the comfort and quality of care for patients wearing the hijab during teledermatology visits.

First, it is important to establish the nature of the visit. While teledermatology offers great flexibility, it should not be used as a surrogate for in-person medical care for all conditions, as certain conditions, such as hair loss and pigmented lesions, are better assessed in the clinic. Therefore, these patients should be encouraged to follow-up in person.

To provide culturally sensitive care, it is necessary to provide arrangements that may improve patients' comfort during virtual encounters. Patients should be informed that they can schedule appointments with female dermatologists if available. During visits, patients should adjust their hijab to the best of their ability depending on where the area of concern is. For example, if a lesion is near the front of the scalp, then patients can pull the hijab back slightly instead of exposing their head entirely. Of course, all areas pertinent to the physical exam should be performed, and the standard of care must be maintained. It is important to note that Muslim women who wear the hijab are likely to cover their trunk and extremities as well. Therefore, patients should be advised to wear loose clothing, so that the affected areas can be revealed, examined easily, and then covered once the examination is complete.

Privacy concerns may also be a barrier for some patients and prevent them from participating in virtual care. When initiating the visit, providers should introduce all people present on the call, including rotators and support staff. The visit should not be conducted in public areas where other individuals not directly involved in patient care may accidentally see the patient, such as shared workspaces. This can reassure patients

**Table 1** Overview of recommendations when caring for patients during teledermatology visits

### Recommendations


- Provide the option to be seen by female providers.
- Adjust the hijab depending on where the area of concern is during the visit to cover adjacent areas.
- Wear loose clothing so that the affected areas can be revealed, examined easily, and then covered once the examination is complete.
- Introduce all people present on the call, including rotators and support staff, when initiating the visit.
- Conduct visits in private areas to avoid exposure to individuals not directly involved in patient care.
- Take representative photographs of the lesion and send them to providers ahead of time via secure email or patient portal.

about the privacy of their visit and help them feel more comfortable. Patients may also consider taking representative photographs of the lesion and sending them to providers ahead of time via secure email or patient portal, which is only accessed by authorized staff and providers.<sup>5</sup> This option empowers patients with the ability to control how much information is shared and to exclude any identifiers. It also helps providers as these images can provide a means of comparison to assess whether an area of concern is changing over time and often have better quality than video images. Table 1 provides an overview of recommendations to help patients feel more comfortable during these virtual visits.

We have provided some recommendations that can assist dermatologists to provide culturally sensitive care to patients who wear the hijab during teledermatology visits. Although teledermatology visits should not replace in-person visits, they can be a useful and convenient supplement to the care patients receive, especially during the COVID-19 era. We hope that these recommendations will alleviate anxieties during teledermatology visits and improve healthcare outcomes for these patients.

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