

Few want to receive skin cancer biopsy results face-to-face

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(HealthDay)—For patients with suspected malignant melanoma or

squamous cell carcinoma, most patients are happy to receive biopsy results by letter or telephone, according to a research letter published online Feb. 8 in the *British Journal of Dermatology*.

Nicola Cooke and Graham B. Colver, B.M., B.Ch., from the Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in the United Kingdom, explored communication methods for conveying a diagnosis of skin cancer to patients. They recruited 77 patients with suspected [malignant melanoma](#) or [squamous cell carcinoma](#). Clinicians explained that patients would receive diagnosis by telephone, letter, or face-to-face after biopsy; patients were offered a leaflet discussing the implications of a cancer diagnosis. Patients were reminded of the three alternatives when they attended for their diagnostic biopsy and their choice was recorded. Patients were surveyed one month after receiving their biopsy results regarding their satisfaction with communication methods.

The researchers found that 47, 37, 11, and 5 percent of respondents had chosen to receive their diagnosis by letter, telephone, face-to-face, or a combination of two methods, respectively. Eighty-nine percent of respondents received their results in the manner they had selected. Overall, 94 percent of [patients](#) were happy with the way they received their diagnosis. Eighty percent of participants were happy with their original choice of communication method, and only 11 percent reported that they would have preferred a different method.

"Conveying bad news in a face-to-face meeting may not be best for every [skin cancer](#) patient," the authors write.

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