

# Twitter crowdsourcing found effective for dermatologic diagnoses

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At the start of the pandemic, many doctors on the front lines turned to Twitter and other social media platforms to find guidance and solace directly from their peers. In early 2020, information on COVID-19 had yet to be studied and published in peer-reviewed journals or printed in medical textbooks. Since then, social media has been characterized as both a boon to medical communities seeking real time information and a major driver of misinformation on the virus and its spread. A new study from researchers at the University of Paris provides support for social media as a potentially useful tool in the doctor's diagnostic toolkit and a way for general practitioners with questions to connect to specialists who may have the answers.

In France, some [general practitioners](#) have turned to social media for help diagnosing common dermatological conditions. They post a deidentified photo of a skin condition to Twitter or MedPics, a private social networking site for doctors, and other clinicians can respond with their diagnosis. In a retrospective observational study, researchers compared the accuracy of using social media to crowdsource a dermatological diagnosis to the

accuracy of asking a dermatologist using more traditional telemedicine methods. Researchers found that diagnoses suggested by doctors on social media generally agreed with teledermatology results, and diagnoses were even more strongly aligned when dermatologists were active in the crowdsourced response. When the images posted to social media were reviewed by an expert committee of dermatologists, the researcher found that primary diagnoses from social media were accurate about 60% of the time, whereas teledermatology consultations were correct about 55% of the time, with no significant difference between the two studied methods.

These results suggest that social [media](#) can be as useful as teledermatology services for [doctors](#) when diagnosing common and minor dermatological conditions, but consultation with an expert dermatologist may still be necessary. The authors acknowledge that [social media](#) is less secure than standard medical communications technologies and that Twitter and other public platforms do not take the same measures to protect patients' privacy.

**More information:** Sophia Serhrouchni et al. Diagnostic Agreement Between Telemedicine on Social Networks and Teledermatology Centers, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1370/afm.2608](#)

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