

Utilizing a Marked Exam Glove to Accurately Display Excision Size and Scar Length to Patients

Brett C. Neill, Spyros Michael Siscos, Edward W. Seger, Thomas L. H. Hocker¹

Division of Dermatology, University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, Kansas, ¹Advanced Dermatologic Surgery, Overland Park, Kansas

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Patients often anticipate their scars to be less than half as long as the actual postoperative scar.^[1] Preoperative consultations have been largely unsuccessful at improving the accuracy of patient expectations for scar length and appearance.^[1] Preoperative visual aids may improve patient expectations.^[2] Furthermore, accurately setting preoperative expectations may be particularly difficult when operating on anatomic sites that are not easily viewable by the patient, such as the posterior neck, back and posterior legs. Therefore, it is essential to develop effective strategies aimed at improving preoperative education to our patients.

In our clinic, we utilize a quick and effective preoperative visual aid that allows patients to visualize the expected excision size when undergoing fusiform excisions with primary closures. After drawing out the excision with a surgical marker [Figure 1], the surgeon may firmly place his or her gloved hand onto the inked drawing thereby transferring the drawing onto the exam glove [Figure 2]. The surgeon may subsequently show the patient the image on the glove which provides a visual aid demonstrating the accurate size and shape of the excision to the patient, and it is explained that the scar size will extend the length of the ellipse. We find this visual aid to be effective and use it routinely when operating on anatomic sites that are not easily viewable by the patient, particularly sites that are difficult to see with a mirror, such as the posterior neck, back or posterior legs. Using a digital image to explain the incision is also a very useful alternative visual aid, but it is more time-intensive to pull up a HIPAA-compliant image on a secure electronic medical record.

Practices Points:

1. Patients often perceive their scars to be less than half as long as the actual postoperative scar.



Figure 1: Patient's back with planned excision drawn with surgical marker

Address for correspondence: Dr. Brett C. Neill,
Division of Dermatology, University of Kansas Medical Center,
3901 Rainbow Blvd, Kansas City, Kansas 66160.
E-mail: bcneill6@gmail.com

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Figure 2: Image of planned excision transposed to exam glove

2. Preoperative visual aids may improve patient expectations for scar length and appearance.
3. Patients are unable to see the marked excision size when operating on difficult to see anatomic locations such as the back or posterior leg.
4. A marked exam glove is a quick and efficient visual aid that demonstrates the accurate size and shape of the excision to the patient.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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