

A PICTURE IS WORTH...

No one can deny the importance of complete and detailed medical records. For one thing, keeping accurate records is a legal requirement. That aside, many of the conditions we encounter affecting the outer surfaces of the body (dermatology, ophthalmic, dental/oral) are largely assessed visually and subjectively. Trying to describe what you see today for comparison when you or a colleague sees it a week or two later can be very difficult if you restrict yourself to words. So don't.

Digital cameras are so good and so affordable today that there is no reason to not have one. While there are many on the market, I really like the one I have (I get no compensation for promoting this camera, by the way). I have the Pentax WG-III. Some of the features I value in this small point-and-shoot camera are as follows:

- There is an array of LED spot-lights surrounding the lens and these lights are on whenever the camera is in Macro (close-up) mode. This allows me to illuminate the field and compose the image, before hitting the shutter release
- The camera is shockproof, so will sustain no damage if dropped or knocked about
- The camera is water proof so can be washed/decontaminated between uses

- The close-up feature and digital microscope allow focusing within a few millimeters of the object

Whether you get this camera or one with similar features, you NEED to have a good digital camera with LED lighting and excellent macro features. A phone camera is not going to do the trick. And once you have this camera, use it... a lot! Take whole-mouth before and after photos of your dental patients, take photos of all skin lesions and ophthalmic problems, shoot videos of lameness exams or other abnormal behaviours. The value of these image files is immense and it is so easy and affordable to get them. Just do it!

And more specifically from my perspective – when you see a dental or oral problem that you want my advice on, please send nice, up-close, well lit, in-focus photos. It makes it so much easier for me to give you accurate advice when I have accurate photographic information about the situation.

And as an aside, pathologists love it when you send pre-op photos along with any samples you are sending in to them. Again, it makes it much easier for them to orient and interpret the samples if they have those photos.

