

PDT - TREATING THE UNTREATABLE

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Background: Treatment of cutaneous lesions by radiotherapy or surgery entails destruction or excision of normal tissue surrounding a lesion. Lesions may be extensive, at sites of poor healing, or adjacent to difficult to reconstruct tissues. This may make treatment by these modalities impossible, or may result in poor cosmetic or functional outcomes. Photodynamic therapy (PDT) offers an important alternative. PDT is a highly selective treatment which can achieve total eradication of malignant and premalignant lesions with minimal damage to normal tissues.

Methods & Results: Patient one had an extensive port wine stain. This had been treated by radioactive Thorium in the past, but this had caused multiple basal cell carcinomas to develop over the whole area. Patient two had a substantial basal cell carcinoma on the back. Photofrin was employed and additional

light irradiation using a laser fibre inserted into the base of a thick lesion. Patient three has Gorlin syndrome and had developed a basal cell carcinoma on the lower eye lid. This was eradicated by Photofrin PDT. Patient four presented with an extensive thick plaque of Bowen's disease covering his knee. This resolved after several treatments of Metvix PDT. Patient five was referred with an extensive area of extra-mammary Paget's disease. This was eradicated by Photofrin PDT.

Conclusion: PDT is no longer simply a treatment option for superficial cutaneous non-melanoma carcinoma and pre-malignant conditions. It is the preferred treatment in a range of challenging situations where surgery and radiotherapy are likely to produce suboptimal results.

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