

**Reply to: “Commentary on
‘Optimizing the total-body skin
exam: An observational cohort
study’”**



To the Editor: We appreciate and agree with the thoughtful comments of Nielson and Grant-Kels¹ regarding our article “Optimizing the Total-Body Skin Exam: An Observational Cohort Study”.² We support their view that “efficiency should be measured by diagnostic accuracy and excellent patient care, not by seconds.”¹ Our original submission did not include actual time. Actual time was added in response to reviewer comments. We can appreciate that this change may have had the unintended consequence of removing focus from our goal of optimizing movements in total body skin examinations (TBSEs) and could be misconstrued as some kind of “benchmark” for the time needed for an efficient examination. Our study was designed to answer the question “Given the volunteer patients, what is the most efficient way to examine them?” We believe that our findings in regard to movements and the sequence of the examination are applicable to most TBSEs. We hoped to highlight how a standardized method may be helpful when teaching the TBSE to residents and students and how it could possibly lead to improved accuracy. Our data are insufficient and inadequate to draw any conclusions regarding how long a typical TBSE should take. Most examinations in our clinics take much longer than the times listed in our study because of the presence of positive findings, routine use of dermoscopy and other ancillary techniques, and patients with limited mobility and also because we often examine genital areas, which were not evaluated on our volunteer subjects. We agree that

the actual times listed should not be considered an appropriate amount of time for a typical TBSE. Much work needs to be done to further optimize the TBSE in different settings and situations and to benchmark the TBSE for different types of encounters. We are grateful to Nielson and Grant-Kels for their commentary,¹ for their interest in this important topic, and for the opportunity to clarify the intent and limits of our study.

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