

Dear Ms. Tran,

Thuy Nhu has hyperpigmented (darker) skin affecting her face, but there is no contour deformity (the shape of her face is normal); so I recommended treatment with laser but not cutting out the affected skin. If surgery or cutting out the skin is done, then she will need at least skin graft to cover the wound; and that may look even worse.

I have the laser here in my office so it will not cost her anything to be treated (except perhaps some pain medication and antibiotics to take during the recovery period). Please let the patient and her family know that the treatment will require 4 to 6 separate laser treatments (at ~ 4 weeks apart - so they need to have arrangement to stay).

The chance for success (defined in the literature as ~ 80% improvement in the discoloration) is about 75%. That would mean that about 25% of patients do not have any improvement with the laser treatment. Unfortunately, we do not know who will or will not respond to the laser treatment (because the pigment may be located so deep that to remove it by laser would mean burning the skin).

Another approach is to do a biopsy to see where the pigment is located in the skin, but that will also require cutting out a small area of skin and will result in scar on her face (and has the additional cost of specialized pathology)- I do not recommend this.

So we should just try to treat it with laser to see if the skin discoloration will respond. So, the family and the patient need to know ahead of time that the laser may not work; that Messengers of Love may spend all this money and there is no improvement in this young girl's appearance.

I will try the laser at least 2 or 3 times before I give up; but if that does not work, then I only recommend using make-up to camouflage her discoloration. I do not think any surgery and reconstruction will result in a better appearance than what she can achieve with make-up.

BTW, she may need to be seen by an ophthalmologist or neurologist: sometimes a patient with this kind of hyperpigmented skin pattern also has it in the eye (which may cause future degeneration of eyesight) or in the meninges (brain lining, which may cause seizure).

I hope this helps,

Dr. Tue Dinh