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Australia recommends effective biopsy technique to identify cancer spread

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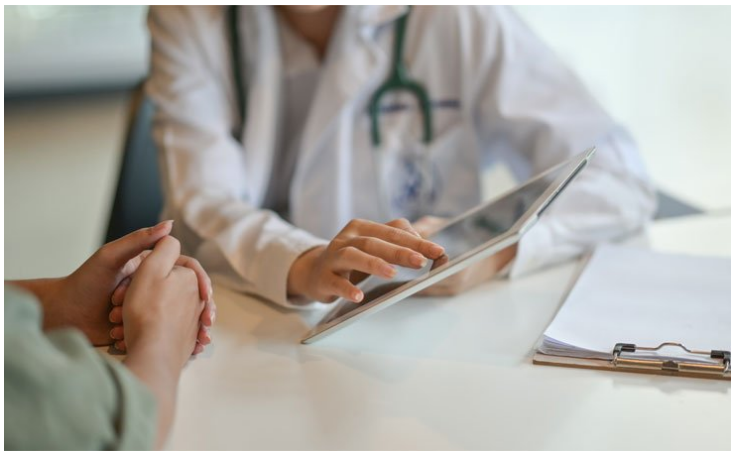
Experts calling for better access to underused cancer diagnosis technique



Sentinel lymph node biopsy (SLNB), a procedure used in people diagnosed with melanoma to identify disease spread, has not increased in Australia, despite the availability of effective therapy options, leading experts to call for better access and data collection.

An innovative diagnostic technique, sentinel lymph node biopsy, is now widely recommended in both melanoma and breast cancer to determine whether cancer cells have spread to the lymph nodes.

However, Dr Caroline Watts, Research Fellow at the University of Sydney and Cancer Council NSW's The Daffodil Centre and the Kirby Institute said Australian data suggests the technique is underused, potentially due to a lack of knowledge of the guidelines and training in the procedure.

"Up-to-date evidence-based information should be readily available to clinicians and patients for informing decisions about undertaking SLNB. The optimal use of online risk tools in practice, and barriers to patient access to SLNB, should be investigated", said the researchers.