CT Imaging: The Benefits are Worth the Responsibilities

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Acknowledgement

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‘Benefits’ of CT

• Standard Axial Imaging
  – Superb Anatomic Depiction
    • Head to toe
  – Innumerable Diagnoses
    • Confirmed
    • Excluded
Hepatoma

Invasion of Gastrohepatic Ligament, Stomach
‘Benefits’ of MDCT

• New uses of CT imaging
  – Renal/Ureteral Stone CT
  – CT “Virtual” Colonoscopy
  – CT Angiography of Head, Pulmonary Vessels, Aorta and Extremities
  – Coronary CT Angiography
Impacted Stone
Lt. UVJ

Edema in
Lt. Trigone
9 mm Tubular Adenoma: Asc Colon
**Mucosal Labeling**

“Missed patch” tool

- Shows colonic wall not displayed w/ auto-centerline
- Useful in cases w/ limited distention

*Courtesy of Perry Pickhardt, M.D.*
Motorcycle Accident

? Arterial Injury
Motorcycle Accident

Occluded Left Anterior Tibial Artery
Example of coronary artery with a heavy plaque burden.

Courtesy of Kevin Johnson,
Diffuse Plaque in Proximal LAD

Courtesy of Kevin Johnson, M.D.
Diffuse Plaque in Proximal LAD

Courtesy of Kevin Johnson, M.D.
Triple Rule-Out:

- Aortic Dissection
- Pulmonary Emboli
- Coronary Artery Disease
Acute Chest Pain: Gated CTA
Hybrid Imaging:

- PET/CT
- CT Colon
- CT Angio
Radiation Exposure from CT

Collective dose to population rising

- High radiation dose per examination
  - Compared to plain radiography
- Increasing number of indications
- Increasing availability
- Easier to perform
- Faster
Millions of CT Exams
Cancer cases could spike as result

By Steve Sternberg
USA TODAY

Overuse of diagnostic CT scans may cause as many as 3 million excess cancers in the USA over the next two to three decades, doctors report today.

Researchers say they're not trying to discourage all use of CT scans — CT stands for computed tomography — which superimpose multiple X-ray images to make 3-D pictures. Rather, they say, CT scanning is an invaluable tool in many cases.

The problem is that doctors too often overlook its risks.

"About one-third of all CT scans that are done right now are medically unnecessary," says David Brenner of Columbia University, lead author of the study reported in today's New England Journal of Medicine.

CT scans offer an unparalleled window into the human body, and their use has grown dramatically in recent decades as doctors use them to identify ailments in the head, abdomen and heart.

Today, about 62 million CT scans are performed nationwide every year, up from 3 million in 1980, the authors say. Medical exposure to radiation, mainly through CT scans, has replaced environmental radon as the dominant source of radiation exposure for the U.S. population, the doctors say.

"On average, we get double the radiation exposure we got in 1980 because of increased CT scans," Brenner says. "Virtually anyone who presents in the emergency room with pain in the belly or a chronic headache will automatically get a CT scan. It is that justified?"

University of New Mexico radiologist Fred Mettler, who was not part of the study, agrees that CT scans are overused. "We're always behind on CT scans because of demand from clinicians," he says.

As many as 5 million scans are now done in children, who are 10 times more sensitive to radiation than adults. The increase was driven by technical advances that allow doctors to capture images in less than a second, eliminating the need for anesthesia to keep a child from moving.

And the use of the scans continues to grow, Brenner says. Doctors are scanning smokers and ex-smokers for early-stage lung cancer, a highly controversial practice; they're using non-invasive "virtual" colonoscopies to check for colon cancer; and CT angiography is now being tested as a possible complement to ordinary angiography as a way to diagnose blockages in arteries leading to the heart.

In criticizing a study on CT angiography at an American Heart Association meeting in Orlando last month, Michael Lauer of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute called that practice into question. He said there is no evidence of benefit from the technology, and a real concern for harm.

New machines being developed by Philips and Toshiba for CT angiograms, however, may be safer because they emit 80% less radiation than standard CT scanners, Brenner says.

Brenner and his co-author, Eric Hall, also of Columbia, say many doctors don't realize that just a scan or two can bathe a patient in roughly the same amount of radiation as the atomic bomb delivered to the Japanese survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki standing a mile or two from ground zero. And many people receive multiple scans over a lifetime.

The amount of radiation delivered during a single CT scan can range from 1,000 to 10,000 millirems, depending on the machine and the protocol. Japanese survivors a mile or two from ground zero received about 3,000 millirems on average.

The cancer rates in the new study were drawn directly from a joint $1 billion study of the bomb survivors financed by the United States and Japan.
Steps to Control Radiation Exposure

Appropriate Utilization

• Tailor exam to the patient/application
  – Reduce dose as much as possible
• CT vs. other imaging tests
• Avoid un-necessary / repetitive studies
Steps to Control Radiation Exposure

Appropriate Utilization

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  - Reduce dose as much as possible
- CT vs. other imaging tests
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### ACR Appropriateness Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Variant</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>AC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>Arteriography visceral</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>X-ray chest</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>Tc-99m labeled RBC scan liver</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>Tc-99m sulfur colloid scan liver</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>X-ray barium swallow and upper GI seri</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>US liver with Doppler</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>CT abdomen</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>CT chest</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>MRI with or without MRA/MRV abdomen</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>Wedge venography liver</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematemesis</td>
<td>No history of alcoholism or liver disease.</td>
<td>Slenoportography</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 167 Topics, > 800 Variants
- 7578 Topics / Variants / Tests:
- CT is listed as a possible test in 931 / 7578 (12%)
### ACR Appropriateness Criteria - Hematemesis

#### Variant 2: No history of alcoholism or liver disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radiologic Procedure</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>RRL*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arteriography visceral</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray chest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tc-99m labeled RBC scan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US liver with Doppler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT abdomen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT chest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI with or without MRA abdomen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedge venography liver</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splenoportography</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relative Radiation Level Designations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative Radiation Level*</th>
<th>Effective Dose Estimate Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>&lt; 0.1 mSv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0.1-1 mSv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1-10 mSv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>10-100 mSv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rating Scale: 1=Least appropriate, 9=Most appropriate

*Relative Radiation Level
### Blunt Abdominal Trauma

#### Unstable Patient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radiologic Procedure</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>RRL*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X-ray chest</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>To evaluate for fracture and abnormal air collection. Patient condition permitting.</td>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US chest abdomen and pelvis (FAST scan)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rapid assessment of free fluid. Patient condition permitting.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>To evaluate for fracture and abnormal air collection. Patient condition permitting.</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT chest abdomen and pelvis with contrast</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arteriography with possible embolization abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Scale:** 1=Least appropriate, 9=Most appropriate

*Relative Radiation Level*
## Blunt Abdominal Trauma

### Stable Patient -- Hematuria

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<thead>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT chest abdomen and pelvis with contrast</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>X-ray chest</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>To identify pelvic or spinal fracture.</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT pelvis with bladder contrast (CT cystography)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Refer to text for indications.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray retrograde urethrography</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Refer to text for indications.</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arteriography with possible embolization kidney</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>If CT identifies active site of bleed or arterial injury.</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray cystography</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CT cystography preferred.</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray intravenous urography</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rating Scale:** 1=Least appropriate, 9=Most appropriate

*Relative Radiation Level*
**Blunt Abdominal Trauma**

Stable Patient – No Hematuria

<table>
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</tr>
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<td>CT chest abdomen and pelvis with contrast</td>
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<td>X-ray chest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arteriography with possible embolization abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US chest abdomen and pelvis (FAST scan)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Information provided by CT.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rating Scale: 1 = Least appropriate, 9 = Most appropriate

- CT is listed as “7, 8, or 9” in 285 / 931 (31%)
- CT is listed as “9” in 115 / 931 (12%)
“In high risk patients, CT should be avoided when an ultrasound or MRI is of comparable diagnostic utility”
RLQ Pain: Pregnant (26 wks)

Appendicololiths
RLQ Pain: Pregnant (32 wks)

Ureteral Calculus
### RLQ Pain in Pregnancy (w/ Fever, WBCs)

<table>
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<th>Comments</th>
<th>RRL*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US abdomen RLQ</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>With graded compression. Better in first and early second trimester.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI abdomen and pelvis without contrast</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US pelvis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT abdomen and pelvis with contrast</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Use of oral or rectal contrast depends on institutional preference.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT abdomen and pelvis without contrast</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Use of oral or rectal contrast depends on institutional preference.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray abdomen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray contrast enema</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tc-99m WBC scan abdomen and pelvis</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
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**Rating Scale:** 1=Least appropriate, 9=Most appropriate

*Relative Radiation Level*

- **US and MR are more appropriate than CT for RLQ pain in pregnant women**
Asymptomatic Patients

• CT Colonography
  – American Cancer Society endorsed CTC as screening test for colorectal cancer in 2008
  – Anticipated life-time risk of colorectal cancer = 5 – 6%
  – Potential risk of radiation-induced cancer from CTC*
    50 years       0.14%
    70 years       0.07%
    (Benefit >> Risk)

*Brenner DJ, Georgsson MA. Mass screening with CT colonography: should the radiation exposure be of concern? Gastroenterology 2005:129;328-337
Steps to Control Radiation Exposure

Appropriate Utilization

- Tailor exam to the patient/application
  - Reduce dose as much as possible
- CT vs. other imaging tests
- Avoid un-necessary / repetitive studies
Appropriate Utilization

“I am an adult and a physician! I don’t need your approval for CT scans that are necessary for my patients”

Anon – ER Physician
Computed Tomography in Emergency Medicine – Ensuring Appropriate Use

September 23-24, 2009
Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad Building
Anastasi Conference Room
Bethesda, Maryland

Journal of the American College of Radiology
Volume 8, Issue 5, Pages 325-329, May 2011
**Physician Education**

- Adult CT patients for abdominal pain
- Questioned about consent, radiation risk and CXR equivalents
- Same questions asked of ED physicians and radiologists

Physician Education

- 9% of referring physicians believed that there was an increased cancer risk from CT
- CXR Equivalents (%):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&lt;1</th>
<th>1-10</th>
<th>10-100</th>
<th>100-250</th>
<th>&gt;500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MDs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rads</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pts</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Medical Exposures Directive of Council of the European Union**
  - Strict referral criteria
  - Strict justification criteria
  - Dose optimization requirement
  - Dose exposure reference levels

*Ionizing Radiation (Medical Exposures) Regulations
**Council Directive 97/43 Euratom
Appropriate Utilization

“CT should be avoided when the benefit is marginal”
Repetitive CT for Renal Colic

- 6 year period
- 4562 patients
- 5564 CT examinations
- Mean age: 45 years
  - 4% of exams were in children

176 Pts (4%) had 3 or more Flank Pain CTs
Estimated Effective Dose

EFFECTIVE DOSE (mSv)

NUMBER OF FLANK PAIN CT EXAMS
Imaging Pathways / Algorithms

• Practice of radiology is highly variable
  – Need to standardize our practices/processes among institutions across the country

• Multidisciplinary diagnostic algorithms that go beyond appropriateness criteria
Hospitals Performed Needless Double CT Scans, Records Show

The Medicare agency distributed the data to hospitals last year to show how they performed relative to each other and to encourage more efficient, safer practices. The review of that data found more than 200 hospitals that administered double scans on more than 30 percent of their Medicare outpatients — a percentage that the federal agency and radiology experts considers far too high. The national average is 5.4 percent.

The figures show wide variation among states as well, from 1 percent in Massachusetts to 13 percent in Oklahoma. Overall, Medicare paid hospitals roughly $25 million for double scans in 2008.

Double scanning is more likely to occur at smaller, community hospitals such as Memorial Medical Center of West Michigan in Ludington. It gave two scans to 89 percent of its Medicare chest patients..
AAPM 2011 Summit on CT Dose

Percentage of patients receiving chest CT scans who were scanned twice

- **Below 15%**
- **15-29%**
- **30% or more**

National average: 5.4%
Diagnostic Algorithm for Suspected PE

Suspect PE
Non Pregnant

Use CCSS
D-dimer/thrombosis
screen to calculate
pre-test probability

Kline neg
and Wells ≤ 2

Kline pos
or Wells > 2

D-dimer

CXR
Optional

Doppler US Legs
inform OB at discretion of
ED Physician
ED consent

UNSTABLE PATIENTS

> 380 lbs
Clinical Assessment

PREGNANT PATIENT

Doppler US Legs
inform OB at discretion of
ED Physician
ED consent

Consider Bedside
ECHO

Consider:
Heparin +TPA 100 mg/2hrs
iv filters,
CT Surgical consult

TREAT
Stabilize

CTPA

Contraindication* to contrast
Less than 280 lbs

Contraindication at discretion of Radiologists
* In obese pt.
reconstruc@2.5mm

Positive
Treat

Negative
Technical

Indeterminate
Other tests

Interpretation

Consult chest radiologist attending

Repeat, if no contraindication

VQ Scan

Normal or Low and
Wells ≤ 2

High

Indeterminate or Low
Wells > 2

STOP

TREAT

Doppler US Legs +/-
consider treatment/
admission

*Contraindications
- Severe allergic reaction
- Renal Failure
  - Creatinine > 1.6
  - Inadequate IV smaller than 20g
Australian Diagnostic Pathways

Pathway Diagram

SUSPECTED ACUTE CHOLECYSTITIS

CXR

US

Positive for acute cholecystitis

Negative, but high clinical suspicion of acute cholecystitis, or equivocal/technically inadequate US

Negative, low clinical suspicion

Intensive Care Unit context

http://www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au
Australian Diagnostic Pathways

- Treat
  - Positive for acute cholecystitis
    - Treat
  - Negative but continuing high clinical suspicion of acute cholecystitis
    - Consider Computed Tomography
    - Consider alternative diagnoses
      - Peptic ulcer disease
        - Endoscopy
      - Other non-traumatic acute abdominal pain
    - Consider Tc-IDA scan or percutaneous cholecystostomy if US suggests acalculous cholecystitis
Australian Diagnostic Pathways

Endorsed by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists

Endorsed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

http://www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au
Managing Incidental Findings on Abdominal CT: White Paper of the ACR Incidental Findings Committee


- Algorithms for Liver, Pancreas, Kidney, Adrenal
- Next Steps:
  - Seek buy-in from other professional societies
  - New effort for Adnexa, Vasculature, GB/ Biliary Tree, Spleen, Lymph Nodes
That’s all...