



Quest Physician Update

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Transforming Healthcare-Together.

Dear Colleagues,

A number of recent articles highlight a steep multi-year increase in the use of high technology imaging. A 2008 *Health Affairs* article reported a doubling of CT scans per patient and a tripling of MRI scans over the last 10 years. In a survey study, 69 percent of radiologists reported “unnecessary or duplicative scans” in the past six months.

Experts raise concerns about the safety and utility of this increase. Rapid increases in high technology imaging have resulted in rapidly escalating healthcare costs. In this time of economic crisis, more than ever, that alone is a pressing concern. The urgency of addressing this issue is increased by the risk of harm to patients from radiation and incidental findings that trigger a cascade of non-value added and potentially risky medical interventions.

The FDA estimates that an adult’s lifetime risk of developing radiation-induced cancer from a CT scan is roughly 1 in 2000. For children, it may be as high as one in 500. An article in the *NEJM* estimates that 1.5-2% of all cancers in the United States may be attributable to the radiation from CT scans.

Healthcare is local, science is not. At Quality Quest for Health of Illinois, we will convene a High Technology Imaging Team. The team will identify science-based appropriateness criteria for ordering physicians to use as a guide to ordering these tests. Success will mean safer, less expensive healthcare. Quest expects that successfully implementing the High Technology Imaging Team’s recommendations will be the basis for persuading health plans to eliminate prior authorization requirements for these tests as it has in other regions. This would be a welcome decrease in administrative hassle for your busy practices.

Quest is hosting an informational meeting on March 5th from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. at the Peoria NEXT Innovation Center, 801 W. Main Street, Peoria. You are invited to attend. Anyone interested in learning more is asked to RSVP to Megan Scarlata at Quality Quest for Health of Illinois. Email: MScarlata@QualityQuest.org Phone: 309-282-8821.

Respectfully,

Gail M. Amundson, MD, FACP