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This weekend, you may have seen a report on CNN about the potential risks of radiation exposure during medical exams. **Pacific Coast Imaging** wants to help you understand this information by providing a response on the subject from your local radiologist. If you have further questions, please contact us or consult with your primary physician.

CNN.com/health

Saturday, November 22, 2008

<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/health/2008/11/21/hfh.fortin.radiation.risks.cnn?iref=videosearch>

Sometimes a little radiation might be too much. CNN's Judy Fortin reports.

Response from Dr. Bill Armington, Pacific Coast Imaging, Astoria

In medicine the equation doctors always deal with is "risk vs. benefit." This is especially true when we perform a procedure on a patient that is potentially harmful.

In radiology, there are many methods used to learn important things about a disease or injury that affects our patient, sometimes with some level of associated risk. In order to weigh the risk vs. benefit of a particular study being considered for a patient, the **American College of Radiology (ACR)** offers a resource listing different patient symptoms and evaluates every type of radiology test that could be used in the situation.

Each test is ranked with a score of 0-9 based on how likely the radiologist is to gather the information necessary to diagnose the patients' condition. Additionally, the ACR includes the relative radiation level (risk) for each study listed. Balancing these factors is crucial, and radiologists are keenly aware of keeping the potential exposure levels for each patient at a minimum. After considering those options, the radiologist or patients' primary physician can then choose the safest, most appropriate radiologic test for the patient.

Here's an example:

If I have a patient that has an abdominal mass that his or her physician can feel on examination, I can go to the ACR Appropriateness Criteria web page and select Gastrointestinal Imaging and then choose Palpable Abdominal Mass. By looking at the list I see an Abdominal Ultrasound would probably be the best choice for the evaluation since it gives almost as much information (7) as an Abdominal CT (8) at a **lower cost** and with **no radiation exposure**.

This resource is applicable in every major area of medicine, for all available radiologic tests. As its use becomes more widespread, the appropriate and safe utilization of radiology will become the norm across the country. This is an example of how Radiologists look out for the well being of their patients and serve as a valuable consultant and integral part of a patients' medical team.

For further information visit:

www.acr.org/SecondaryMainMenuCategories/quality_safety/app_criteria/pdf.aspx

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American College of Radiology ACR Appropriateness Criteria®

Clinical Condition: Palpable Abdominal Mass Radiologic Procedure	Rating	Comments	RRL*
CT abdomen with or without contrast	8	Most definitive.	Med
US abdomen	7	Less costly and no ionizing radiation.	None
MRI abdomen with or without contrast	6	No ionizing radiation. See comments regarding contrast in text under "Anticipated Exceptions." 	None
X-ray abdomen	5	A simple and inexpensive way to evaluate bowel for obstruction or constipation as cause of the "mass."	Med
X-ray contrast enema	4		Med
X-ray upper GI series	4		Med
X-ray upper GI series with small bowel follow-through	4		Med
Rating Scale: 1=Least appropriate, 9=Most appropriate			*Relative Radiation Level