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Thursday, August 5, 2010

Marshall County, Indiana's community news source since 1851

Volume 160 Issue No. 180 50¢

Responsible medical imaging

There has been much media attention lately about radiation doses delivered by medical imaging procedures, particularly modern multi-slice computed tomography (CT) scanners. However, it is important to remember that we are exposed to naturally occurring ionizing radiation everyday from radionuclides — or radioactive atoms — in the earth, the air, and even from our own bodies.

We absorb even more radiation when we fly in airplanes, visit high-altitude locations or spend time in the sun. In addition to natural sources of radiation, we are also exposed to man-made sources, including building materials, tobacco smoke and medical imaging.

Radiation exposure from medical exams, including CT scans, is just a part of the radiation we commonly receive. Radiation doses from today's CT equipment are well within the acceptable range for the general population and is a reasonable trade-off for the added information that modern CT scanners provide.

Medical imaging exams save lives, increase life expectancy and are less expensive and safer than the invasive procedures they replace. Further advances in technology and more careful imaging have shown that CT radia-

GUEST COMMENTARY

By MIKE MCCREA M.D. RADIOLOGIST,

tion dose can be precisely controlled and significantly reduced without affecting image quality.

At XRC Medical Imaging, it is incumbent on us as medical professionals to minimize radiation exposure whenever possible. That is why we adhere to the As Low As Reasonable Achievable (ALARA) program to only use as much X-radiation as needed to produce images of optimal diagnostic quality.

One way in which we accomplish this is by utilizing our CT scanner's Dose Modulation software to limit the radiation dose to only that which is necessary. We also support the Alliance for Radiation Safety in Pediatric Imaging's Image Gently™ initiative and routinely supply parents of pediatric patients with a publication entitled "A Parent's Guide to Radiation Exposure from CT Scans." Furthermore, all CT scanning equipment and personnel working with CT at our facility meet or exceed American College of Radiology standards for

accreditation in computed tomography.

In the past few months, there have been calls for more regulation and monitoring of medical imaging procedures. A recent online article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, for example, called for FDA regulation of computed tomography (CT) scans along with better reporting and tracking of radiation dose.

While our imaging center supports efforts to accurately monitor and track radiation dose, limiting radiation exposure from medical imaging procedures ultimately relies on the experience, capabilities, equipment and expertise of the imaging facility and staff performing the screening and diagnostic tests. Assuring that our patients receive only the smallest dose of radiation to produce their medical images is always of paramount importance to us.

Dr. McCrea is a board-certified radiologist with XRC Medical Imaging, LLC (XRCMI), a division of X-Ray Consultants, Inc., a private radiology practice consisting of 16 radiologists. X-Ray Consultants has practiced in the Michiana area for over 50 years, providing professional radiology services to regional hospitals.