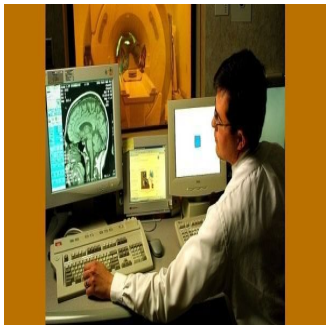
Primary Care Doctors Say Medical Imaging Improves Patient Care



A majority of primary care physicians believe that advanced medical imaging, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and positron emission tomography (PET), provides considerable value to patient care, according to a study published online in the *Journal of the American College of Radiology (JACR)* . Notably, primary care physicians whose careers predated the widespread availability of advanced medical imaging tended to associate it with even higher value.

Researchers conducted a national survey of 500 primary care physicians in the United States using an online self-administered questionnaire. Results of the study show that primary care physicians overwhelmingly indicated that advanced imaging:

- Increases their diagnostic confidence;
- Provides data not otherwise available;
- Permits better clinical decisions;
- Increases confidence in treatment choices; and
- Shortens time to definitive diagnosis.

“Primary care physicians are patients’ main point of contact with the health care system and often the end users of the information that radiologists provide," said the study's lead author Christine M. Hughes of the Hadley Hart Group. "The fact that they consider imaging of such high importance shows just how vital these technologies are for quality patient care.”

During the past 10 years or so, imaging has been under fire mainly due to rapid growth in utilisation. At the same time, there have not been many studies validating imaging's benefits.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has noted that with improved healthcare policy and an increasing number of available medical equipment, the number of radiological medical procedures are increasing considerably. Effective and of good quality, imaging is important for further medical decision making and can reduce unnecessary procedures.

Based on the survey results, "the overall ability of advanced medical imaging to facilitate rapid and accurate diagnoses has contributed to PCPs’ perception of its value,” explained Richard Duszak, MD, co-author of the study.

“Advanced medical imaging facilitates patient triage, and for sicker patients, decreases the frequency of exploratory surgery, and shortens hospital lengths of stay. And PCPs clearly recognise that,” Dr. Duszak added.

The American College of Radiology (ACR) is the principal organisation of radiologists, radiation oncologists, and clinical medical physicists in the United States, with more than 30,000 members. The ACR's goal is to serve patients and society by maximising the value of radiology, radiation oncology, interventional radiology, nuclear medicine and medical physics by advancing the science of radiology and improving the quality of patient care.

The ACR advocates on behalf of the radiology profession and ACR membership with the U.S. Congress, federal agencies and state legislative and regulatory bodies.

Source: American College of Radiology (ACR)
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