



UTAH RADIATION CONTROL BOARD POSITION STATEMENT

"Computerized Tomography Scanning of Healthy People Discouraged"

December 6, 2002

The Utah Radiation Control Board discourages patients without symptoms from obtaining whole-body computerized tomography (CT) scans until scientific studies demonstrate that they are effective in reducing disease or death. Whole-body CT scanning is marketed as a preventative or proactive healthcare measure to examine healthy individuals who have no symptoms or suspicion of disease.

Studies have shown that medical x-rays account for the majority of an individual's exposure to man made radiation. Although scientists believe there is a health risk from low levels of exposure to x-rays, the risk is generally considered to be small when compared to proven medical benefits. Even though the risk is small, exposures should still be maintained As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA). According to the ALARA principle, it is important to avoid conditions where exposure to radiation is not warranted, because there is no benefit from unnecessary radiation. The goal of radiation protection is to prevent or minimize exposures that have no benefit.

Under current regulations, a licensed practitioner of the healing arts must authorize x-ray examinations. The Utah Radiation Control Board believes that self-referred screening examinations should only be performed after approval for a healing arts screening program has been obtained from the Board's Executive Secretary. The only self-referred screening examinations currently approved are for mammography.

The Food and Drug Administration, the American College of Radiology, the Society for Thoracic Imaging, and others do not support the use of whole-body CT screening of the general public. However, the Board recognizes that some examinations by CT may be appropriate in certain patients with specific medical indications.

A number of problems cited with whole-body CT scanning include the observation that no scientific evidence shows that the examination improves medical care for the public or prolongs life. Concerns have also been raised over the possibility that unnecessary additional procedures will be performed, resulting in increased healthcare costs to the patient as well as a possible increase in disease or premature death from these unnecessary follow-up examinations or surgeries. Additionally, there are concerns about the relatively high amount of radiation received by patients undergoing CT screening examinations.

Therefore, until medical evidence shows that the examination is safe or is effective in prolonging life, the Utah Radiation Control Board will continue to require specific authorization for this procedure. Furthermore, the Board encourages the public to discuss with their family physician whether a CT scanning examination may be appropriate for them based upon their own medical history.

This position statement was passed by a vote of 11-0 by the Radiation Control Board at the December 6, 2002 meeting.