EDITORIAL

Imaging examinations: The new Guide to Good Usage has arrived!

We are happy and proud to open the year 2013 with the publication of the new edition of the Guide to Good Usage of Medical Imaging Examinations [Guide du bon usage des examens d’imagerie médicale], in partnership with the French Society for Nuclear Medicine.

This new edition was made possible thanks to the important effort made by more than 800 physicians, not only radiology experts and nuclear physicians involved in the writing of this document, but also all of the clinical experts appointed by the learned societies that were asked to participate in the rating and rereading phases.

We thank them all warmly.

The new version of this guide will be available in January 2013. It is a complete review of the guidelines and justifications of the guide published in 2005. The methodology was as strict as that of the earlier edition. The methodology was the formalized consensus method among experts (long version) recommended by the French National Authority for Health [Haute Autorité de Santé]. This method is based on the creation of recommendations based on three phases:

- A rating phase including the analysis of the literature of the past 10 years after searching databases, the writing of justifications and the proposal of recommendations.
- A rating phase that consists of submitting recommendations and justifications to a multidisciplinary group, including not only imaging specialists, but also physicians and specialised surgeons and general practitioners. At the end of a first rating period, the members of the multidisciplinary group meet in person to obtain a consensus.
- After a second rating period, the recommendations that have been amended are submitted to a larger multidisciplinary group. This last phase, called a reading phase, makes it possible to adjust a few amendments again based on the recommendations that are then definitively validated by the steering committee.

The guide includes 400 items—each item represents a symptom or a disease—written by 14 specialised groups with the active and precious participation of the organ societies. For each item, the different imaging methods proposed are given a new indication (indicated, specialized examination, indicated only in particular cases, not indicated as first-line imaging, not indicated), a proof level (A, B, C), comments and finally a dose level the modalities delivering ionizing radiation (O to IV based on the Institute for Radioprotection and Nuclear Safety [Institut de Radioprotection et de Sûreté Nucléaire]).
Initially created to meet a regulatory obligation of radioprotection of patients (justifying principle of Directive EURATOM 97/43, transposed in French law in 2003), this guide has become a veritable reference of good practices for use by physicians who may have to request or carry out medical imaging examinations. Widely awaited by the authorities, the guide should soon receive a label from the HAS. Like the first version, this version has received the strong support of the Authority for Nuclear Safety [Autorité de Sûreté Nucléaire], who sees these recommendations as an increasingly marked evolution of the use of methods that do not expose patients to X-rays.

As it is set up, this guide for good usage could be used as a reference text within the framework of evaluation programmes for professional practice and continuous professional development programmes, some of which are currently being prepared by the HAS. Lastly, it will be a precious tool for the training of young doctors.

Available online (sfr.radiologie.fr), this guide can be updated regularly, and, in the short-term, used on tablets and smart phones. The technology used will make it possible in the future for it to be connected or even integrated in decision assistance systems.

Let’s hope that this 2013 edition will be distributed and shared by all professionals concerned. You can contribute considerably to help make this happen by inviting your corresponding colleagues to refer to it.

On behalf of the entire SFR team, we wish you an excellent 2013!

Disclosure of interest

The authors have not supplied their declaration of conflict of interest.

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