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Paediatric Medical Imaging: The Three ‘Rights’

In order to promote the safe and effective use of medical imaging, the Mayo Clinic has started a collaborative effort to ensure that a national protocol is put into action. This initiative, published online in the Journal of Patient Safety, calls for the American College of Radiology, the Joint Commission, the Intersociety Accreditation Commission and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to implement a standard that would require three safety practices as the basis for accreditation of hospitals and diagnostic imaging facilities.

According to Stephen Swensen, M.D., lead author and radiologist at Mayo Clinic, "No hospital or medical imaging facility in the country should be granted the privilege of imaging children unless it first meets fundamental safe practice performance measures."

The three, child-centered safety measures proposed by the Mayo Clinic team and that are also in line with the National Quality Forum Safe Practice for Paediatric Imaging include The Right Exam (minor head trauma imaging and use of the Paediatric Emergency Care Applied Research Network Clinical Prediction Rule), The Right Way (protocols to reduce dual-phase head and chest imaging) and The Right Dose (using size-specific paediatric CT imaging protocols).

Hospitals and diagnostic institutions that follow this standard and establish these protocols can play a critical role in ensuring the safe use of medical imaging in children. Dr. Swensen firmly believes that these tools can be used effectively and can help in improving the safety and quality of medical care for children. However, this can only be done by reducing the risks and maximising the benefits. The medical team needs to ensure that the exam is indeed required and also evaluate whether the patient needs radiation, an ultrasound or an MRI. He points out that everyday children are given CT scans for minor head trauma, which should never have been performed. He states that if there is no benefit of the exam that is being done, then the risks for the patient are much higher.

The ultimate goal should be to make the right diagnosis with minimum radiation and to use it only when it is absolutely necessary.

Source: Newswise / Mayo Clinic
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