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MITA Response to The New York Times Article on CT Angiography

MITA submitted the following letter to the editor in response to The New York Times' June 29, 2008, article on CT heart scans.

To the Editor:

Your June 29 story (“Weighing the Costs of a CT Scan Inside the Heart”) grossly distorts by omission the peer-reviewed medical literature demonstrating how CT heart scans can result in costs savings and improved patient outcomes.

While numerous peer-reviewed studies demonstrate that such scans detect heart disease and help patients avoid heart catheterization, your readers were presented only with critical anecdotes. Readers would have gained a fuller understanding of the issue, for example, had the article cited a 2007 study showing how multi-slice heart scans reduced diagnostic time and produced cost savings.

Proper utilization of any medical technology is important. To address this matter, policymakers and medical societies are embracing appropriateness and accreditation criteria so health decisions remain the domain of physicians and patients and not insurance companies. Unfortunately, your story made no mention of this.

Medicare’s CT scan coverage decision shows that when the data is fully evaluated, imaging saves money and improves outcomes. *The Times* should have taken a similar approach, weighing all the evidence before rendering its conclusion

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