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## **ACR clarifies Joint Commission's alert on imaging**

The American College of Radiology (ACR) is seeking to clarify the Joint Commission's Sentinel Event Alert, related to radiation-based imaging.

The “Radiation Risks of Diagnostic Imaging” alert indicates general agreement that “care should be taken to weigh the medical necessity of a given level of radiation exposure against the risks, and that steps should be taken to eliminate avoidable exposure to radiation.” This message concurs with the message that the ACR has been sending to its members, patients and the general public for several years, the college said in a statement.

The alert indicates that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) January 2012 requirement for accreditation of CT, MRI, and PET was promulgated “as a result of the potential dangers associated with ionizing radiation.” The ACR, a sponsor of the legislation requiring this accreditation, considers this statement inaccurate, first because the legislation is aimed primarily at ensuring a high level of quality for these modalities, including inspection and evaluation of image quality and, second because MRI, a component of the accreditation requirement, produces no ionizing radiation.

A second inaccuracy is the statement that the ACR launched its National Radiology Data Registry (NRDR) in May. In fact, NRDR has been in existence since 2008. In May, the ACR launched its Dose Index Registry (DIR), a registry that permits facilities to monitor dose from each CT scanner and compare those doses to national benchmarks. The Joint Commission alert makes no specific mention of the existence of the DIR.

The college responded positively to the Joint Commission acknowledgement that “experts disagree on the extent of the risks of cancer from diagnostic imaging” but is concerned with the recommendation for “awareness of the potential dangers from diagnostic radiation among organizational leadership, hospital staff and patients” considering that there is significant scientific disagreement on the magnitude of those dangers, according to the statement.

In general, the ACR applauded the alert for its comprehensiveness and strong recommendations regarding selection of the right procedure and the right dose, creating effective processes, ensuring safe technology and promoting a safety culture. The college was particularly pleased to have already addressed, through its DIR, recommendation 19 which endorses the creation of a national registry to track radiation doses.