



# No Place to Hide

By Lynda Haschke

“The doctor will see you now” takes on a whole new meaning in the world of 21<sup>st</sup> century medicine that utilizes a variety of internal body imaging technologies to diagnose and, in some instances, treat just about any malady known to man. Today it’s literally true that the doctor can see you like never before.

*An MRI illustrates  
what's on your mind*

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Dr. Blaise Jones, Medical Director of Radiology at Baylor Medical Center Frisco, says that while scans have become a vital diagnostic tool for physicians, patients, too, have reason to appreciate the new technologies. According to Dr. Jones, “The benefits are just as great for the patient because of the virtual elimination of pain often associated with past surgical diagnostic procedures.”

Scans are routinely performed today on every part of the body and are most effective in helping to diagnose heart disease, cancer, trauma, bone disease and a host of other conditions.

### COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY (CT)

CT – or CAT scanning – is a noninvasive medical test that combines special X-ray equipment with sophisticated computers to produce clear, cross-sectional images that reveal more details than regular X-rays. Using specialized equipment to create, and experts to interpret CT scans, physicians can more easily diagnose problems such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, infectious disease, trauma and musculoskeletal disorders.

Often the preferred method for diagnosing many different cancers, CT imaging allows a physician to confirm the presence of a tumor and measure its size, location and the extent of the tumor’s involvement with nearby tissue. It is also used in the detection, diagnosis and treatment of vascular disease and blood clots as well as checking for abdominal aortic aneurysms. CT scans are also a valuable tool when diagnosing and treating spinal problems and injuries to other skeletal structures. Damage to some of the tiniest bones in the human body can be spotted by CT when other methods of detection fail.

CT scanning can quickly identify injuries to the lungs, heart and vessels, liver, spleen, kidneys or other internal organs in cases of trauma. It is also used to guide biopsies and other procedures like minimally invasive tumor treatments; to plan for and evaluate the results of surgery and to measure bone mineral density for the detection of osteoporosis. Almost everyone, from newborns to the elderly, may undergo CT scanning. In fact the use of CT scans over X-rays on children has grown more than 700% in the last decade despite the fact that a CT scan

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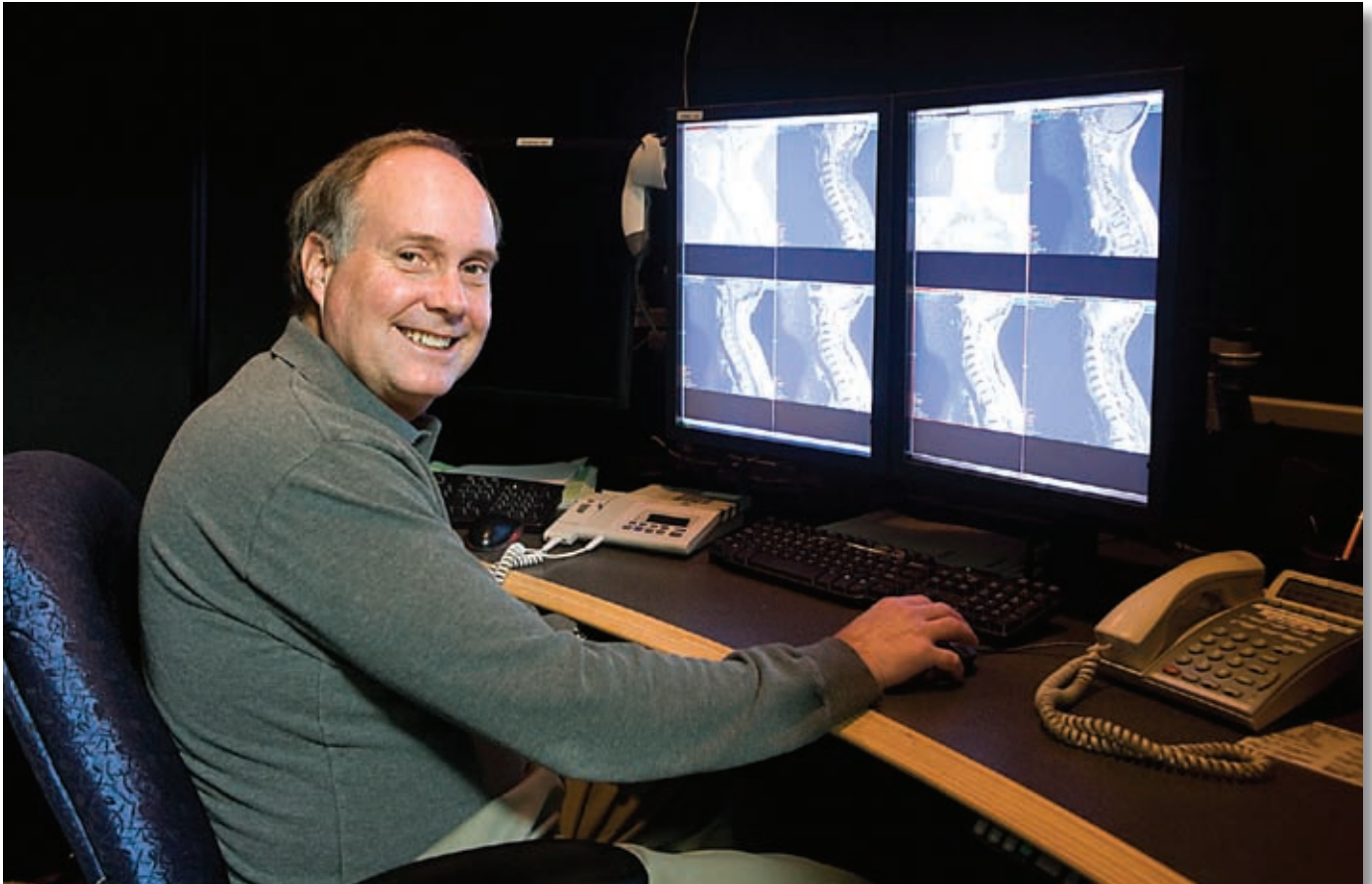
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Dr. Blaise Jones

photo by Chris Fritchie

delivers as much radiation as 300 regular X-rays. Most physicians however, believe the benefit of an accurate diagnosis far outweighs the risk.

Dr. Virginia Scroggins, who practices at Baylor Medical Center Frisco, remembers that it wasn't too long ago that diagnosing something as common as appendicitis involved essentially pushing on the belly to see where it hurt. "Now we just do a quick CT scan and have an exact diagnosis in five minutes," says Scroggins. "CTs prevent unnecessary surgeries."

Anyone who has watched an episode of *Grey's Anatomy* or *ER* knows what a CT scanner looks like – a large white donut. The patient lies on a narrow table that slides in and out of the scanner. For some CT exams, an iodine dye (contrast material) is used to enhance visibility in the area of the body being studied. Once the patient is inside the scanner, a number of X-ray beams and a group of electronic X-ray detectors rotate around the patient, measuring the amount of radiation being absorbed throughout the body. Then a special computer program processes this data to create two-dimensional, cross-

sectional images of the body which are then displayed on a monitor. The result is a very detailed, multidimensional view of the body's interior. The whole process usually takes from five to 30 minutes, depending on the area being examined.

It wasn't too long ago that diagnosing something as common as appendicitis involved essentially pushing on the belly to see where it hurt.

The main benefit to CT scanning from a patient viewpoint is that it is painless and noninvasive. Often a diagnosis determined by CT scanning eliminates the need for exploratory surgery and surgical biopsy. For diagnosticians, a major advantage of CT scanning is the simultaneous, accurate

imaging of bone, soft tissue and blood vessels.

In emergency cases the benefit of this technology is obvious. CT scans often reveal internal injuries and bleeding quickly enough to save lives. The downside is that emergency room doctors often don't have a record of how many CT scans a patient has had previously and unknowingly expose the patient to radiation more frequently than may be safe.

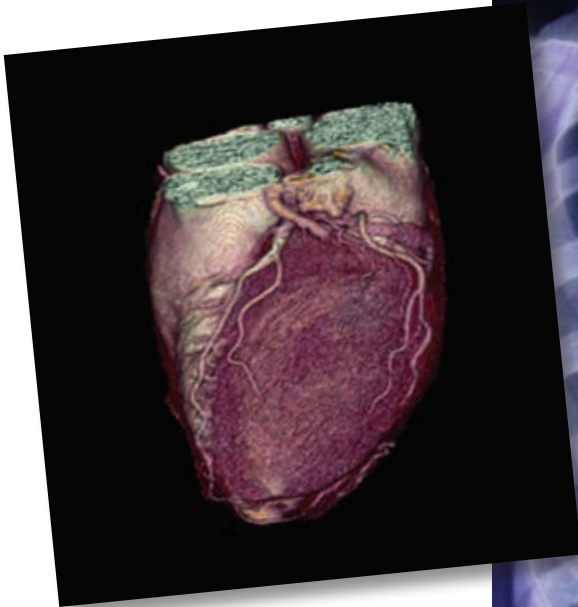
CT scanning is not recommended for pregnant women because of potential risk to the baby. Nursing mothers who have been injected with contrast material for a scan are usually cautioned to wait 24 hours before they resume breast feeding.

## MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING (MRI)

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) utilizes the combination of a powerful magnetic field, radio frequency pulses and a computer to produce detailed pictures of organs, soft tissue, bone and virtually all other internal body structures.

Detailed MRI allows physicians to better evaluate parts of the body and

*Chest x-ray (left)*  
©Judex|Dreamstime.com  
*3D CT Heart scan (below)*  
provided by Legacy Heart Center



certain diseases that may not be assessed adequately with other imaging methods such as X-ray, ultrasound or CT scanning. MRI does not use ionizing radiation (X-rays) and is generally considered a better option than CT for examining soft tissue.

Anyone who finds it difficult to lie still during imaging may find undergoing an MRI challenging. In some cases a mild sedative is prescribed.

MRI are generally performed to evaluate organs, including the heart, liver, biliary tract, kidney, spleen, pancreas, adrenal glands and the reproductive organs. Physicians use MRI to help diagnose or monitor treatment for tumors, coronary artery disease and heart problems, diseases of the liver, congenital arterial and venous vascular anomalies and diseases, conditions involving the bile duct, gallbladder and pancreatic ducts, breast cancer and implants.

Unlike conventional X-ray examinations and CT scans, MRI does not utilize radiation. The scanner itself looks very similar to a CT scanner but is essentially a large, round magnet. The MRI unit uses a powerful magnetic field to align the nuclear magnetization of hydrogen atoms in water in the body. Radiofrequency fields are used to alter the alignment of this magnetization, causing the hydrogen nuclei to produce a rotating magnetic field detectable by the scanner. This signal can be manipulated by additional magnetic fields to construct an image of the body.

A computer then processes the signals and generates a series of images, each of which shows a thin slice of the body. The differentiation of abnormal (diseased) tissue from normal tissue is often easier with MRI than with other imaging techniques such as X-ray, CT and ultrasound. MRI enables the detection of

abnormalities that might be obscured by bone with other imaging methods.

The entire examination is usually completed within 45 minutes. In most cases, an MRI exam is safe for patients with metal implants, except for a few types – those with an implanted defibrillator or pacemaker, cochlear (ear) implant or some types of clips used on brain aneurysms.

In general, an MRI examination poses almost no risk to the average patient when appropriate safety guidelines are followed. However, obtaining high-quality images with an MRI requires the patient to remain perfectly still while the images are being recorded. Anyone who finds it difficult to lie still during imaging may find undergoing an MRI challenging. In some cases a mild sedative is prescribed to help patients relax and remain still during the procedure.

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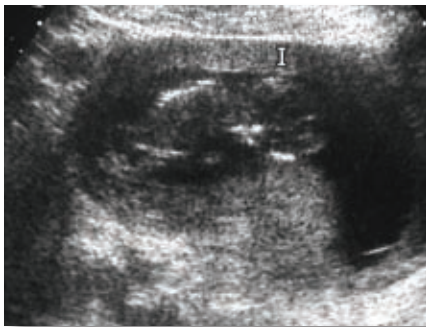
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Presbyterian Plano is one of the few medical centers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area with an advanced 3 Tesla (3T) MRI, the most powerful scanner available to patients today. The 3T MRI helps physicians improve the accuracy of diagnoses and treatments of broad categories of diseases including strokes, brain tumors, epilepsy, musculoskeletal and heart disease.

“The 3T provides more sophisticated scanning images more quickly,” said Dr. Jeff Diebner, a member of Texas Radiology Associates who practices at Presbyterian Plano. “There are only a handful of these powerful machines in this area; we’re lucky to have one here.”



2D Ultrasound image at 12 weeks

#### ULTRASOUND IMAGING

While most of us are familiar with the use of ultrasound for assessing fetus health in utero, it can also help diagnose a variety of conditions and assess organ damage following an illness. Ultrasound is also used to help physicians evaluate symptoms like pain, swelling and infection; guide procedures such as needle biopsies, image the breasts and guide biopsies. Ultrasound also helps doctors diagnose heart conditions and assess damage after a heart attack or other illness.

Ultrasound imaging, or sonography, involves the use of high-frequency sound waves to produce pictures of the inside of the body. Ultrasound exams do not use ionizing radiation (X-rays). Because ultrasound images are captured in real-time, they can show the structure and movement of the body’s internal organs, as well as blood flow.

Conventional ultrasound displays the images in thin, flat sections of the body. Advancements in ultrasound technology include three-dimensional (3-D) ultrasound that formats the sound wave data into 3-D images. Four-dimensional



3D Ultrasound Images

## A Business Born of Bonding by Lynda Hascke

Renee Caldwell and Malissa Nied met in 1998 as neighbors in Cedar Hill, Texas. Although they came from very different backgrounds, they shared common experiences in having children and raising a family. Both endured difficult pregnancies and they developed a strong bond based on sharing those experiences.

In 2002, when Mrs. Caldwell was pregnant with her fourth child, she shared her latest sonogram, the typical gray, grainy kind, with Mrs. Nied, and together they wondered why someone couldn’t produce a better image. About the same time, a mutual friend of theirs also had an ultrasound, but hers was a 3D ultrasound. The 3D pictures were amazing and vastly different than the traditional 2D ultrasound produced. And so, a business idea was born.

Stork Vision is a non-diagnostic prenatal imaging company that provides parents-to-be with the latest in 2D, 3D and 4D (live motion) images of their unborn child. Since its inception, Stork Vision’s competitive advantage has been its strict adherence to medical protocols. The company has two medical directors, Dr. Joseph

R. Kilianski, Jr., Chief of Obstetrics/Gynecology at Baylor Regional Medical Center, and Dr. Alan Gorrell, a practicing Obstetrician and Gynecologist with more than 30 years’ experience who is also a Registered Diagnostic Medical Sonographer (RDMS).

At each Stork Vision location, imaging is performed with a physician’s consent in a non-clinical, comfortable, home theatre setting by certified sonographers. Each Stork Vision sonographer is certified by the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography (ARDMS); in fact, 80% of Stork Vision owners are in the medical field, either as physicians, nurses or sonographers.

One of those sonographers, Shelley Boone, started working for Stork Vision in 2007 and purchased the Frisco store at 6100 Preston Road last year with her husband Daniel. “This is really the parents’ first true bonding experience with their child and each session is so full of joy,” says Mrs. Boone. “We feel very blessed to be able to participate in this special celebration of a new life.”

The idea, born in the minds of the two Cedar Hill women, has grown to locations in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia as well as offices in eight other Texas cities.

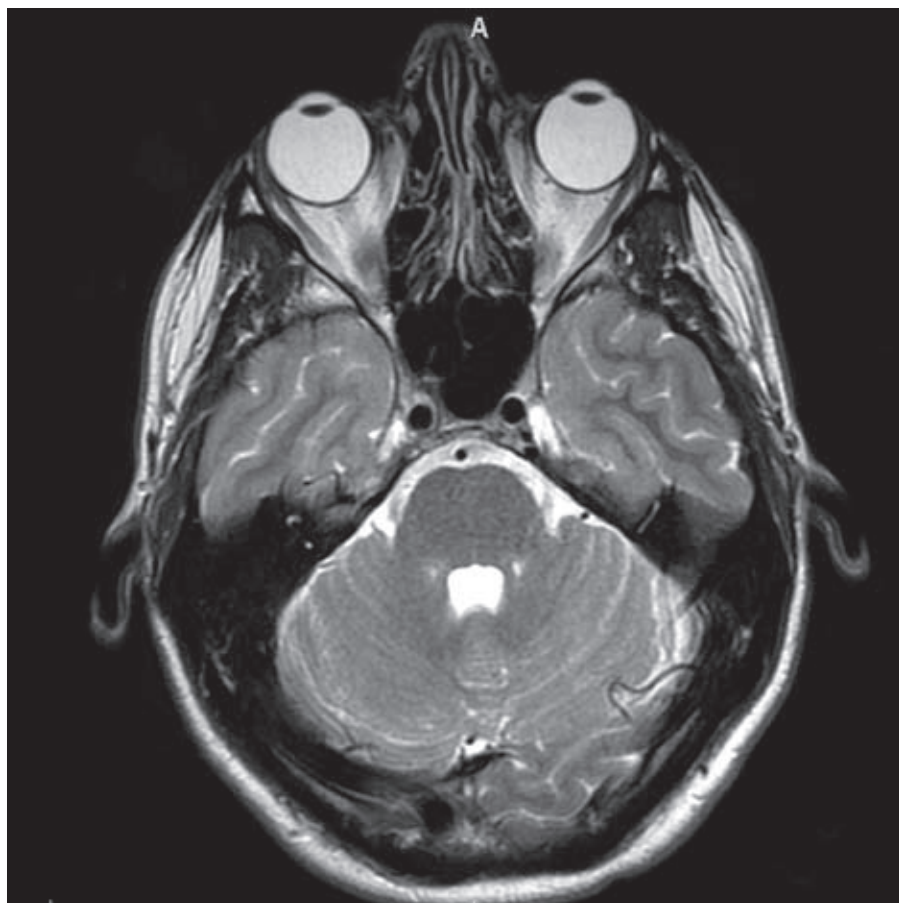
(4-D) ultrasound is 3-D ultrasound in motion.

Doppler ultrasound is a special ultrasound technique that evaluates blood as it flows through a blood vessel, including the body's major arteries and veins in the abdomen, arms, legs and neck. Doctors can evaluate blockages to blood flow and narrowing of the arteries, which may be caused by plaque and then determine whether the patient is a good candidate for a procedure like angioplasty.

There are three types: Color Doppler uses a computer to convert Doppler measurements into a spectrum of colors to visually display the speed and direction of blood flow through a blood vessel; Power Doppler is a newer technique that provides greater detail of blood flow, especially when blood flow is little or minimal; Spectral Doppler displays blood flow measurements graphically, in terms of the distance traveled per unit of time.

Ultrasound imaging is based on the same principles involved in sonar. When a sound wave strikes an object, it bounces back, or echoes.

3-D Doppler ultrasound has also been identified as a powerful new diagnostic tool in helping radiologists distinguish between malignant and benign breast masses, according to a new study published in the November issue of



Radiology. Malignant breast masses often exhibit increased blood flow compared to normal tissue or benign masses. Using 3-D Doppler ultrasound, physicians are able to detect vessels with higher flow speeds, which likely indicate cancer.

Ultrasound imaging is based on the same principles involved in sonar. When a sound wave strikes an object, it bounces back, or echoes. By measuring these echo waves it is possible to detect changes in organs, tissues and vessels, or detect abnormal masses such as tumors.

In an ultrasound examination, a transducer is used to send the sound waves and record the echoing waves. When pressed against the skin, the transducer emits small pulses of inaudible, high-frequency sound waves into the body. As the sound waves bounce off the internal organs, fluids and tissues, the sensitive microphone in the transducer records tiny changes in the sound's pitch and direction. These signature waves are instantly measured and displayed by a computer, which in turn creates a real-time picture.

Doppler ultrasound measures the

direction and speed of blood cells as they move through the veins and arteries. The movement of blood cells causes a change in pitch of the reflected sound waves, called the "Doppler effect." A computer collects and processes the sounds and creates graphs or color pictures that represent the flow of blood through the blood vessels.

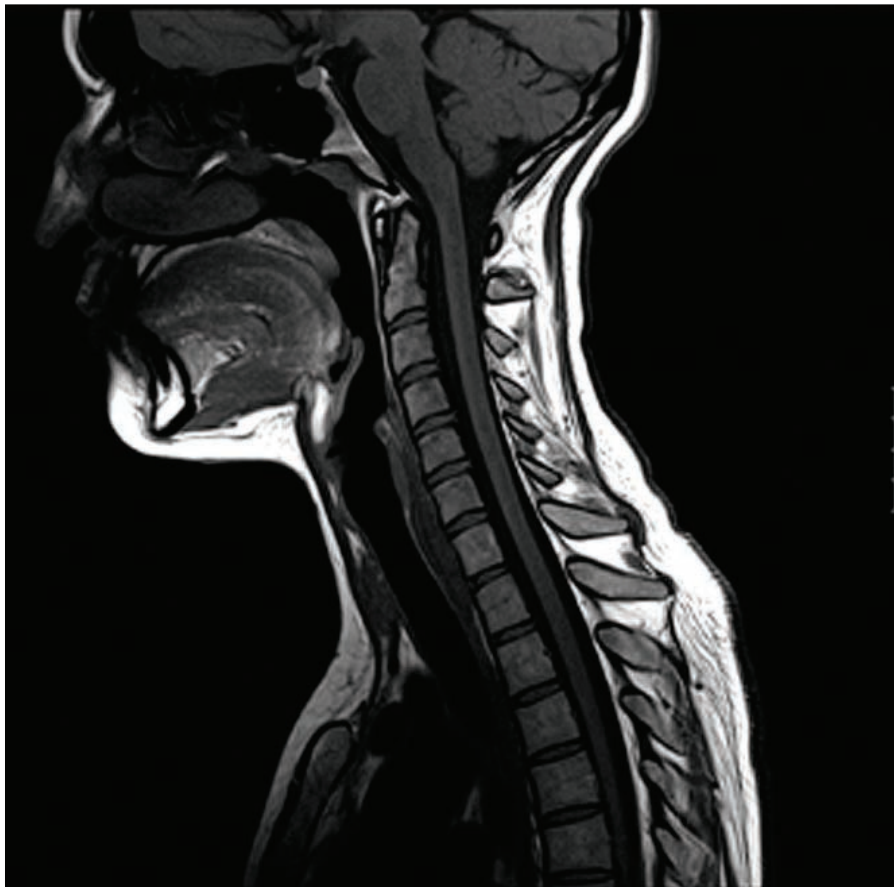
Most ultrasound scanning is noninvasive and painless. Ultrasound is the preferred imaging method for the diagnosis and monitoring of pregnant women and their unborn babies.

#### BONE DENSITY SCAN (DXA)

Bone density scanning, known as dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA) or bone densitometry, is an enhanced form of X-ray technology that is used to measure bone loss and is the standard for measuring bone density.

DXA is most often used to diagnose osteoporosis, a condition that affects mostly women after menopause. Osteoporosis involves a gradual loss of calcium which causes the bones to become thinner and more likely to break.





Spinal MRI  
provided by Touchstone Imaging

The DXA test can also be used to assess an individual's risk for developing fractures. The risk of fracture is affected by age, weight, history of prior fracture, family history of osteoporosis and life style issues such as cigarette smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

Bone density testing is strongly recommended for post-menopausal women who are not taking estrogen, anyone who has a personal or maternal history of hip fracture or smoking, post-menopausal women who are tall (over 5' 7") or thin (less than 125 pounds), men with clinical conditions associated with bone loss, anyone on medications that are known to cause bone loss, and anyone with Type I diabetes, liver disease, kidney disease or a family history of osteoporosis.

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DXA machine sends a thin beam of low-dose X-rays with two separate energy peaks through the bones being examined. One peak is absorbed by soft tissue and the other is absorbed by bone. The soft tissue amount is subtracted from the total to calculate the patient's bone mineral density. The amount of radiation used is extremely small—less than a day's exposure to natural radiation.

#### POSITRON EMISSION TOMOGRAPHY (PET)

Positron emission tomography, also called PET imaging or a PET scan, is a type of nuclear medicine imaging and is the latest advancement in diagnostic scanning technology.

Nuclear medical imaging uses small amounts of radioactive material to diagnose or treat a variety of diseases, including many types of cancers, heart disease and certain other abnormalities within the body. Nuclear medicine procedures are noninvasive and usually painless; the imaging scans use radioactive materials called "radiopharmaceuticals" or radiotracers.

Depending on the type of nuclear medicine exam, the radiotracer is either injected into a vein, swallowed or inhaled as a gas. It eventually accumulates in the organ or area of the body being examined, where it gives off energy in the form of gamma rays. This energy is detected by a gamma camera, a PET scanner and/or probe. These devices work together with a computer to measure the amount of radiotracer absorbed by the body and to produce special pictures offering details on both the structure and function of organs and tissues.

A PET scan measures important body functions, such as blood flow, oxygen use and glucose metabolism, to help doctors evaluate how well organs and tissues are functioning. Today, most PET scans are performed on instruments that are combined PET and CT scanners. The combined PET/CT scans provide images that pinpoint the location of abnormal metabolic activity within the body. The combined scans have been shown to provide more accurate diagnoses than the two scans performed separately.

The information provided by nuclear

medicine examinations is unique and often unattainable using other imaging procedures. By identifying changes in the body at the cellular level, PET imaging may detect the early onset of disease before it is evident on other imaging tests such as CT or MRI.

A PET scan measures body functions, such as blood flow, oxygen use and glucose metabolism, to help doctors evaluate how organs and tissue function.

As reported in the October 2008 issue of Archives of Neurology, a growing body of evidence suggests that PET scanning using a novel brain-imaging agent called "Pittsburgh Compound B"

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## Dental Imaging

IMAGING TECHNOLOGY is also changing the face of dentistry. In seconds a dentist can obtain information about a patient that once required lengthy and possibly, multiple office visits. Companies like OrthoDent3D have emerged with services that provide accurate pictures of a patient's anatomy allowing dentists to map out a plan for each patient and predict the outcome before actual treatment begins.



(PiB) may help offer a definitive diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease in living patients. Abnormal proteins called "beta-amyloid plaques" are a hallmark of the disease, but the only sure way to examine such changes has been to perform a brain biopsy. PiB is injected into a vein before the scan; it attaches to Alzheimer's-related brain deposits and lights up on the scan to indicate the presence of the abnormal proteins.

Nuclear medicine has been used for more than five decades and there are no known long-term adverse effects from such low-dose exposure. Because the doses of radiotracer administered are small, the radiation risk is very low

compared to the potential benefits.

Though in some cases newer equipment is available that can substantially shorten the procedure time, nuclear medicine procedures can be time-consuming. It can take hours to days for the radiotracer to accumulate in the part of the body under study and imaging may take up to several hours to perform.

### SCREENING SCANS

Whole body CT scans have become popular in some areas to screen for potential disease. None of the physicians interviewed for this article recommends them, nor does the American College of Radiology.

"We do get some inquiries for them and I really have mixed feelings about it," says Dr. Diebner. "On one hand, if you do catch something early, it's worth it. But the numbers just aren't there. You really have to screen a lot of people, which is a lot of extra radiation and a lot of extra expense that is not covered by insurance. Then, a lot of times if you find something it turns out to be nothing. But in the meantime, you've generated more follow-up studies and caused more worry."

A lot of times if you find something it turns out to be nothing. But in the meantime, you've generated more follow-up studies and caused more worry.

Scroggins concurs, "There are a lot of incidental findings and false positives which then require further testing and perhaps even surgery," she notes. "Our policy is not to do screening."

The American College of Radiology says that it "does not believe there is sufficient evidence to justify recommending total body CT screening for patients with no symptoms or a family history suggesting disease...the ACR is concerned that this procedure will lead to the discovery of numerous findings that will not ultimately affect patients' health but will result in unnecessary follow-up examinations, treatments and significant wasted expense."

Lynda Haschke is a freelance writer living in Little Elm.

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