

Imaging Update

Welcome to NIA's Imaging Update Newsletter

National Imaging Associates, Inc., an affiliate of Magellan Health Services, is pleased to introduce this new online publication for ordering physicians, imaging facilities and staff.

Imaging Update is designed to give you new information about topics that may directly affect your practice, including radiology industry trends, credentialing tips, provider satisfaction survey information, claims/billing tips, quality improvement projects, relevant NIA provider network initiatives, and more.

Visit this area of the NIA Web site regularly for the latest NIA news impacting the provider/NIA partnership. Our goal is to share information with you in a way that supports your delivery of quality imaging services for our members.

If you have comments or suggestions about *Imaging Update*, please send an e-mail to EditorNIA@MagellanHealth.com.

NIA Launches First Annual Provider Satisfaction Survey

Imaging providers will be able to complete the satisfaction survey online or on paper

NIA will launch its first annual radiology provider satisfaction survey for contracted imaging facilities in June of 2008. The knowledge we assemble from our network providers' responses to the survey is vital to NIA's continuous effort to replicate successes and to identify and correct any shortcomings in our programs. We hope you will take time to send us your candid opinion and any suggestions you may have regarding how we can improve our service to you and our members.

The survey will be mailed or faxed to a large sample of NIA contracted providers. The questionnaire can be completed and returned via fax or mail, or online at RadMD.com.

The questionnaire asks for your opinions and experiences covering a range of topics, including:

- Customer service
- Authorization procedures
- Peer consultation
- Appeals
- Credentialing

Once the questionnaires are returned, NIA will tabulate and analyze the responses. The results will be summarized in aggregate and no individual provider responses will be identified. We will share the summary of the results with Magellan's internal departments and our existing and potential customers as appropriate. After reviewing the results, our Quality Improvement Committee will address any identified opportunities for improvement and capitalize on the areas we are performing well by applying best practices across other functional areas. As always, we appreciate your time and effort to give us feedback.



Obtaining Imaging Accreditations is Key!

NIA wants to remind all imaging providers of the importance of obtaining and maintaining current accreditation from the industry's accrediting bodies. Please be sure to notify NIA if your accreditation status changes.

Accreditation demonstrates a commitment to quality care and patient safety. It sets your practice apart from the competition. It lets your patients and the health care community know that your facility meets or exceeds nationally accepted standards of care in the performance and interpretation of diagnostic imaging.

The formal accreditation process takes an in-depth look at your practice's operation and is designed to ensure that quality is constantly maintained. Among the components evaluated are the qualification of the personnel, equipment performance, effectiveness of quality control measures, and quality assurance programs. Accrediting organizations also evaluate the quality of your facility's clinical images through a peer review mechanism. The accreditation can be in effect for as long as three years depending on the type of accreditation attained; at the end of the term your facility must complete the accreditation process again to maintain its accreditation status.

For information on the following accreditations, you can contact:

The **American College of Radiology (ACR)** at www.ACR.org or 800-770-0145, for the following accreditations:

- MRI
- CT
- Ultrasound: General, OB/GYN, Breast and Vascular
- Nuclear Cardiology and PET scan
- Mammography

ACR also offers a Diagnostic Modality Accreditation Program which incorporates all the ACR accreditation programs (except Mammography) under one application.

The **American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM)** at www.AIUM.org or 800-638-5352, for the following accreditations:

- Ultrasound: OB/Gyn, General and Breast

The **Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC)**, at 800-838-2110, for the following accreditations:

- Vascular ultrasound www.ICAVL.org
- Nuclear Cardiology/ PET www.ICANL.org
- Echo ultrasound www.ICAEL.org

Why Seek Accreditation?

Facilities seek accreditation for a variety of very good reasons:

- Accreditation is a peer reviewed, educationally-focused evaluation of imaging practice.
- The review may document the need for dedicated equipment, continuing education or qualified personnel.
- An expert assessment of image quality is provided.
- Formal review may be used to meet criteria of ACS, state or federal government, or third-party payers.
- Medicare and other payers have enacted reimbursement policies that may require accreditation.
- Accreditation is useful as a marketing tool.

Imaging Focus...on Radiation Safety

For a number of years, NIA has been tracking the issue of concern about exposure to radiation as a result of diagnostic imaging. With a recent study suggesting that CT scans performed today could result in two percent of U.S. cancers in coming decades, and with the increasing utilization of CT potentially pushing that figure even higher, NIA supports increased attention to radiation exposure as a public health concern. We want to work with ordering physicians to heighten awareness about the dangers of excessive radiation exposure.

In an article published in the Nov. 29, 2007 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers David Brenner, Ph.D., D.Sc., and Eric J. Hall, D.Phil., D.Sc., linked the growth in the use of computed tomography with increased cancer risk. The authors noted that the most effective way to reduce the radiation dose from CT scans is simply to reduce the number of CT studies that are ordered. The authors also noted that, if it is true that about one third of diagnostic imaging tests are not medically necessary, then possibly 20 million adults and one million children are being unnecessarily irradiated.

NIA has implemented patient safety initiatives, in conjunction with its health plan partners, based on years of experience, research and consultation to generate greater awareness of potential risks and assist physicians and their patients in making more informed choices about diagnostic procedures.

NIA's radiation safety program begins with an analysis of medical claims data to identify health plan members who are approaching or who have

reached high levels of medical radiation exposure as a result of repeated radiologic tests. NIA then works with its health plan customers to develop awareness campaigns for physicians and members.

Members with high levels of exposure can be flagged within the NIA authorization system so that physicians seeking authorization for CT scans, nuclear studies and other imaging procedures can be made aware of the patient's cumulative exposure level. Health plan providers also have access to online radiation safety tools to help them make decisions about diagnostic testing. NIA's approach to reducing unnecessary radiation exposure was noted in a white paper published in the *Journal of the American College of Radiology* in 2007.

"Our role is to provide information to ordering physicians to assist them in comprehensively addressing their patients' needs," said Thomas Dehn, M.D., NIA's executive VP and chief medical officer. "Early results of these efforts are promising. Many physicians, when alerted to patient-specific issues of radiation exposure, choose to use non-radiation producing diagnostic examinations as a substitute for their initial choice," Dehn noted.

NIA's chief executive officer, Eric Reimer, added, "Our goal in working with health plans and physicians is to raise their consciousness about this important issue and facilitate discussion among patients, their doctors and their families so they can make informed health care choices."

"In many cases, the benefits of having a diagnostic test far outweigh the risks of radiation exposure. But, because radiation exposure is cumulative, it's important that patients undergo the least invasive and fewest number of diagnostic tests necessary to accurately diagnose and treat their illness, avoiding unnecessary procedures early and reserving CTs and other relatively high-dose procedures for when they are absolutely necessary."

*Thomas G. Dehn, M.D.,
NIA's executive vice president and
chief medical officer, and a Fellow of
the American College of Radiology*