



Computed Tomographic Colonography: Guidance on Standards

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Summary

Over the last decade there has been increasing use of computed tomographic colonography (CTC) in the diagnosis of colo-rectal cancer and a subsequent increase in the establishment of CTC services. Radiographers have been involved in work undertaken to set international standards for CTC. This guidance note provides information on standards for CTC and points to the key paper in which these are described.

Introduction

Over the last decade there has been increasing use of computed tomographic colonography (CTC) in the diagnosis of colo-rectal cancer and a subsequent increase in the establishment of CTC services. In some NHS Trusts and Health Boards, CTC has almost completely replaced barium enema examinations and those NHS imaging services providers still undertaking large numbers of barium enema examinations are actively seeking to change.

As radiographers in the UK became the staff group that carried out barium enema examinations, they were instrumental in establishing and maintaining high and consistent procedural standards for the examination and in delivering the 'gold standard' of double reading and reporting of the examination.

This was recognised in work undertaken to set international standards for CTC. This guidance note provides information on standards for CTC and points to the key paper in which these are described.

International Standards for CTC

In 2008, the College of Radiographers was invited to join a CTC Standards Committee led by Dr David Burling, Consultant Gastrointestinal Radiologist and member of the British Society of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology (BSGAR). The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) also contributed to this work and formally adopted the standards derived.

The purpose of the committee was to develop standards for CTC with the intention that these should have international reach. Contributions and comments on the standards as they developed were received from a range of countries around the world including Canada, Australia and New Zealand,

and Europe via the European Society of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology.

There were four radiographers on the Standards Committee (Dr Julie Nightingale, Christine Bloor, Janice Muckian, Audrey Paterson) and four radiologists (Dr David Burling, Dr Andrew Lowe, Dr Stuart Taylor, Dr Damian Tolan).

A Standards Steering Group was established to oversee the work and comprised Dr David Burling (BSGAR), Professor Erika Denton (National Clinical Lead for Diagnostic Imaging), Professor Steve Halligan (Principal Investigator for SIGGAR 1 Trial¹), Dr Clive Kay (Chairman of BSGAR & Consultant Radiologist), Dr Giles Maskell (Registrar of the RCR), Professor Julietta Patnick (Director, Bowel Cancer Screening Program), Dr Roland Valori (National Clinical Lead for Endoscopy), Mr Chris Wiltsher (Patient Representative, RCR), and Professor Audrey Paterson (Director of Professional Policy, CoR²).

The work of the committee and steering group enabled a set of 12 standards to be produced and adopted widely.

There are twelve agreed standards for CTC, each setting out the minimum acceptable and best practice (with the exception of Standard K. which only sets out best practice). These are:

- Patient information and consent
- Bowel preparation
- Imaging parameters and protocols
- On the scanner table
- Use of intravenous contrast
- Additional post CTC 'one-stop' tests
- Patient experience and safety
- Interpretation methods and computer aided diagnosis (CAD)
- Patient management and interval surveillance
- Planning CTC lists and teams
- Measuring and monitoring CTC activity/outcomes
- Training and assessment

Where to find the international standards

The work of the committee and steering group was published in a paper in Clinical Radiology in June 2010 by Dr David Burling on behalf of the International Collaboration for CT Colonography (Burling D, CT colonography standards, Clin Rad 2010; 65: 474-480).

The article is best accessed on-line as this provides direct access to both the paper and to a much more detailed explanation of, and evidence associated with, each standard. The latter is only available in the e-pages of Clinical Radiology, the peer review journal of the Royal College of Radiologists.

The Royal College of Radiologists have kindly agreed open access to the article and its e-pages for members of the Society of Radiographers. Members are able to gain access directly from the members section of www.sor.org and clicking on the icon for the Radiography journal, then clicking 'browse the radiography journal on line'.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has also published guidance on CTC,

in 2005. This can be found at <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/IPG129>

It is important to note that this guidance is now at least seven years old.

Conclusion

The College of Radiographers was pleased to be able to contribute to this important standard setting work and believes it sets a high quality framework for the delivery of CTC services in the UK. It also enables the high level contributions of radiographers to lower gastro-intestinal work to continue, now within the context of CTC studies.

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References

1. The SIGGAR trial is a multi-centre randomised comparison of CT colonography versus standard investigation (barium enema or colonography)
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2174515/> (accessed October 2012)
2. Roles stated as at the time the steering group was established.

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