Whole-body computed tomography as a screening test

Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement

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Authors' objectives
This review aims to assess the available evidence on whole-body computed tomography as a screening test.

Authors' conclusions
With regard to the use of whole-body CT as a screening test, the ICSI Technology Assessment Committee finds:

- Whole-body CT should not be considered as a screening tool at this time. Whole-body CT screening is not specific enough or tailored appropriately to detect coronary artery calcification, lung cancer, or colon polyps or masses.

- The CT screening procedure is safe except for the risk of radiation exposure and minor side effects that have been reported. There are potentially hazardous risks associated with false positive and false negative findings and associated follow-up procedures.

- No evidence exists to evaluate the effectiveness of whole-body CT as a screening test for patients with no symptoms or a family history suggesting disease (Conclusion Grade: Grade Not Assignable). There is concern that this procedure may lead to the discovery of numerous findings that will not ultimately affect a patient's health, but will result in increased patient anxiety, unnecessary follow-up examinations and treatments, and wasted expense.

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