MRI magnetic resonance imaging

Record Status
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Citation

Authors' objectives
To evaluate the evidence relating to the use, costs and effectiveness of MRI.

Authors' conclusions
MRI is a recent diagnostic method which is undergoing rapid development and with great potential for the future. Scientific evidence supports the superior safety and diagnostic information from MRI for certain conditions, primarily in the central nervous system, spinal cord, and neuromuscular system. Possible long term risks of exposure to strong magnetic fields are not known. MRI can reduce the need for some other examinations such as CT, angiography, arthroscopy and ultrasound. In some cases, it is possible that MRI may completely replace other examinations such as myelography. There is a lack of rigorous scientific studies comparing the results of MRI with other imaging techniques. No published study verifies the cost effectiveness of MRI relative to other techniques. The purchase, installation and operation of an MRI unit is expensive. Many hospitals in Sweden plan to purchase an MRI, but further MRI installations should focus on county hospitals providing acute care. Decisions about the purchase and choice of equipment must be considered carefully in the context of existing diagnostic imaging facilities (particularly CT) and the volume of patients with indications for MRI investigation.

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