

# **NYSRS Physics Committee Report**

## **April 1, 2011**

### **1.0 Medical Physics Licensure – New York:**

- 1.1** Medical Physicists at MSKCC and elsewhere in the state continue to encounter problems obtaining limited permits and licenses. Drs. Fontenla and St. Germain at MSKCC asked Mr. Pizzutiello to assist in resolving issues with NYSED.
  - 1.2** The plan to implement changes to the Commissioners' regulations necessary to resolve this problem was slowed by the late January 2011 announcement of the retirement of the Deputy Commissioner, Frank Munoz. Mr. Walter Ramos, Executive Secretary State Board for Medicine, informed Mr. Pizzutiello that further action would need to await the appointment of an Interim deputy commissioner.
  - 1.3** Mr. Ramos asked Mr. Pizzutiello for a letter from the NY State Radiological Society that he could present to the incoming Interim Deputy Commissioner outlining the problem and proposed resolution. With assistance from Mr. Pinsky and approval from Dr. Rappaport, President of NYSRS, Mr. Pizzutiello sent a letter to Mr. Ramos summarizing the problem and proposing two solutions.
  - 1.4** On March 28, Mr. Pizzutiello spoke with Mr. Ramos, and was informed of the appointment of Valerie Grey as Deputy Interim Commissioner. She is also serving as Chief Operating Officer of NYSED. During the initial meeting with Ms. Grey and other senior staff members, Mr. Ramos informed Ms. Grey of the Medical Physics Licensure issue and identified this as a priority issue for his division. Mr. Ramos informed Mr. Pizzutiello that by April 1, 2011 Mr. Ramos would complete a memorandum to Ms. Grey on the subject and propose a reasonable solution, to be implemented in a short timeframe. Mr. Ramos continues to agree that this is an important issue with a solution that is not unduly complex, though others in NYSED may not share this view.
  - 1.5** Due to the urgency of this issue for the MSKCC residency program, Medical Physicists from MSKCC have met with their corporate counsel, Mr. James L;ytle, who plans to aggressively pursue this issue after discussing the history with Mr. Pinsky.
- 2.0** In the last week of March, 2011, a TV program featured Dr. Oz, who commented that women should request a thyroid shield during mammography, stating that "it can't hurt." A number of medical physicists around the country expressed concern over this misinformation and its effect on patients. Mr. Pizzutiello and his group prepared a statement for their web site, available at <http://www.upstatemp.com/News.asp>.
- 2.1** A senior member of NYSDOH BERP staff contacted Mr. Pizzutiello, expressing strong supported this statement, and suggested that he should "take on Dr. Oz," to dispel the confusion and fear that has resulted from his widely publicized statements. Instead, Mr. Pizzutiello has communicated with Dr. Rappaport, Ms. Penny Butler at ACR, and the leadership of AAPM, requesting that these organizations consider a formal response. ACR is nearing completion of a response, aimed at referring physicians and patients, and AAPM leadership is also drafting a response. Interested members should be on the lookout for an official ACR response, and NYSRS should consider adding the link to our web site, or other forms of communication with our members.

Respectfully submitted,  
Robert J. Pizzutiello, MS, FACR, FAAPM, FACMP  
Chair, NYSRS Physics Committee  
April 1, 2011



## News & Hot Topics

### Mammography and Thyroid Cancer: The Facts

We are aware that Dr. Oz recently suggested that all women should request a thyroid shield when undergoing mammography exams, stating that "it can't hurt." Dr. Oz is Vice-Chair and Professor of Surgery at Columbia University, but he is not a radiologist, and he is not a medical physicist. While he is obviously well-educated and well-intentioned, he is not expert in the critical issues relating to his suggestion. Wearing thyroid shields during mammography exams is unsupported by the scientific literature, and could result in unnecessary increases in breast dose due to repeated mammography exams.

In 1980, CRC Press published the *Handbook of Radiation Doses in Nuclear Medicine and Diagnostic X-Ray*, which considered dose to the thyroid due to mammography "negligible relative to the absorbed dose to the female breasts" during the examination (page 211, Table 120).

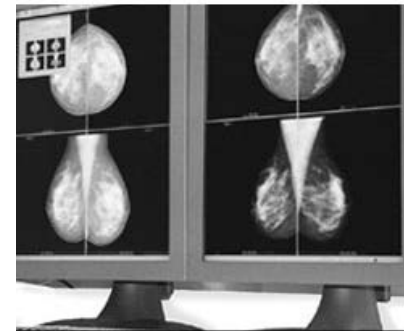
In a 1999 paper by Whelan et al, published in *Australasian Radiology* (**43**: 307-310), thyroid organ doses were measured to be 0.04 mGy for a total screening mammographic examination, consisting of 2 views (CC & MLO) per breast. A 1988 study published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* found no significant increase in diagnosed thyroid nodules in patients who had received an estimated thyroid dose of 600 mGy (Kaplan et al; **66**: 376-382).

In addition to these published sources of dose data, every mammography unit is tested by a physicist annually to confirm that the x-ray beam is limited at the chest wall to only expose the breast tissue during exams. This testing is mandated by the FDA, and any variance from compliance must be addressed within 30 days.

Perhaps most importantly, thyroid shields are cumbersome when technologists position patients for mammograms. Proper positioning of the patient is critical to obtaining a high quality mammogram. Interference with proper positioning caused by thyroid shields will not only reduce the amount of breast tissue visible to the interpreting radiologist, but it will also cause many repeated mammography images, unnecessarily doubling the breast dose for that view.

While we respect Dr. Oz and his expertise in surgery, his recommendation that all women should wear thyroid shields during mammography examinations is unfounded and could result in unnecessary increases in breast dose from mammography. We strongly recommend against wearing thyroid shields during mammography exams.

## QUALITY



- physics that enhances patient care.

Contact us today  
585-924-0350

### Physics you will value.

Copyright 2011 Upstate Medical Physics - Diagnostic Radiology, MN, MH TRP, PC.  
All rights reserved.