Does More Testing Always Equal More Results? A Look Into Full Body MRI Scans

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INTRODUCTION

- MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) machines use computer-generated radio waves and a strong-magnetic field to create very detailed images of the body.
- Full MRI body scans are used to scan the whole body at once to detect any abnormalcies or potential diseases.
- Entices people who suffer with family history of diseases, serious health anxiety, or simply out of curiosity.
- Full body MRI scans sound very enticing, but are they worth it?

ADVANTAGES

- MD Anderson Cancer Center suggests full body scans to monitor diseases patients already have.
- Patients with diseases such as
  -LiFraumeni syndrome: a rare genetic mutation of body that increases risk of cancer
  -multiple myeloma: blood cancer causing bone lesions around the body
- People with diagnosed illnesses can benefit from this scan by tracking the development of their disease.
- People who have no diagnosed illnesses may not benefit as much as they think they would because of the risk of incidental findings thus causing more stress.

DISADVANTAGES

- A confirmed diagnoses after a full body MRI scan is very unlikely and incidental findings are more common than people realize.
- A provider sees a finding on a scan that may look abnormal and may want more testing done.
- This leads patients down a rabbit hole of more and more testing, leading to excessive amounts of stress and money being spent unnecessarily.
- A small group of people may find what they are looking for, but majority will not.
- Situations like incidental findings cause more stress and testing on the individual.
- Patients spend more money/time for little results.

STATISTICS

- Studies in the past by National Library of Medicine shows 95% of people found an abnormal finding after their scan.
- Only 1.8% of these findings were identified and diagnosed as cancer.
- The possible benefits of full body MRI scans are not statistically proven to outweigh the risks.

CONCLUSION

- It is our responsibilty to put the patients best foot forward.
- Autonomy of the patient to make their own decisions is important, but beneficence of the healthcare worker must also be top priority as well.
- We must do what is morally correct for the patient.
- Agreeing to scan a patient's whole body knowing the risk of incidental findings and potentially a more harmful outcome than successful one, is not of good morale.
- Unless describing benefit vs. risk to patients about this scan, these scans are not worth the harmful outcomes associated, and it is our duty to protect our patients in every aspect.

REFERENCES

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