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Correspondence

Re: A national UK audit for diagnostic accuracy of preoperative CT chest in emergency and elective surgery during COVID-19 pandemic



Sir—We read with interest the recent snap audit of the value of preoperative chest computed tomography (CT) in patients being considered for emergency or elective surgery, with data collected in May 2020, and welcome the additional evidence it provides.¹ The joint guidance of the British Society of Thoracic Imaging (BSTI) and British Society of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology (BSGAR) on chest imaging in patients undergoing CT of the acute surgical abdomen was published on 25 March 2020, just before the peak of the current wave of the epidemic and when disease prevalence was higher and reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing less well established.

Our joint statement was revised on 22 May 2020², to acknowledge the decreasing prevalence of Covid-19 and the improved availability of RT-PCR, and concluded that there is no longer a need for routine CT of the entire thorax for patients undergoing acute abdominopelvic imaging.

We also note the updated Royal College of Radiologists guidance on the role of CT in screening elective preoperative patients (dated 14 May),³ which states that “a pre-op CT chest does not add to the detection of COVID-19 in asymptomatic, isolated and tested patients and is not recommended for screening before elective cancer surgery”.

We are thus satisfied and pleased that, in combination, our guidance has remained contemporaneous in spite of the

challenge of a rapidly evolving evidence base that COVID-19 presents.

Declaration of Competing Interest

AP, KF and SAT are past or present committee members of BSGAR. AN, GR are committee members of BSTI.

References

1. Callaway M, Harden S, Ramsden W. National UK audit for diagnostic accuracy of preoperative CT chest in emergency and elective surgery during COVID-19 pandemic. *Clin Radiol* 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crad.2020.06.010>.
2. British Society of Thoracic Imaging. Updated BSGAR-BSTI statement for chest imaging in patients undergoing CT of the acute surgical abdomen. 2020. Available at: <https://www.bsti.org.uk/standards-clinical-guidelines/clinical-guidelines/covid19-bsti-bsgar-decision-tool/>. accessed 25/6/2020.
3. Royal College of Radiologists. *The role of CT in screening elective preoperative patients*. 2020. Available at: <https://www.rcr.ac.uk/college/coronavirus-covid-19-what-rcr-doing/clinical-information/role-ct-chest/role-ct-screening>. accessed 25/6/2020.

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