



HEALTH AWARENESS

Taking A Closer Look At Body Scans

(NAPSA)—When taking a closer look at X-ray computed tomography (CT) whole-body scans of individuals with no symptoms, medical imaging and radiation safety specialists are becoming concerned about uncertain benefits, high costs and high radiation. The whole-body scans have been aggressively marketed by promising preventive medicine and implying peace of mind. Whole-body CT (3-D X-ray) scans, promise the ads, can reveal hidden medical problems that doctors can treat early.

But medical and scientific organizations are raising doubts about the procedure. Experts in medical imaging and radiation say there are no scientifically demonstrated benefits of the scans and many reasons to avoid them. A group with expertise in the physics of medical radiation—The American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM)—is the latest organization to speak out against the procedure.

“It’s not a question of ‘Can I afford this?’ but instead ‘Do I really need it?’” says Robert Gould, president of the AAPM and a professor of radiology at the University of California at San Francisco.

By speaking out on whole-body scans, the medical physicists of AAPM are joining ranks with the American Heart Association, the American College of Cardiology, the American College of Radiology and state agencies in Pennsylvania and Texas. In a statement, AAPM says that total-body scanning is “not scientifically jus-



Some medical experts feel that whole-body scans have no scientifically demonstrated benefits and tend to drive up medical costs.

tified” for patients without symptoms. With no scientifically documented benefits, whole-body scans have many potential drawbacks and even some risks, medical physicists say. These include relatively high radiation exposure and high costs that insurance will not cover.

These same critics suspect that whole-body scans also produce a heightened risk of “false positives” that can lead to needless surgeries and potential complications.

All experts agree that individuals should consult their own physician for advice before having such a scan.

For more information and to print a copy of a brochure entitled “*Full Body Scans—What You Need to Know,*” visit the Food and Drug Administration Web page on whole body scanning at <http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/ct>.