

Evidence Based Imaging – Paolo Raggi

The use of cardiovascular imaging has more than doubled in western nations during the last decade. Despite the frequently adduced reasoning that the population is ageing and the complexity of disease states is increasing, the exponential increase in imaging utilization has been seen as the result of inappropriate over use. Over time this caused a growing concern among payers and Government agencies as the cost of imaging soared in the absence of a clear indication that outcomes were substantially affected. In an attempt to slow the growth in utilization, payers in North America started proposing drastic cuts to reimbursement for imaging procedures and professional organizations responded by developing lists of appropriate indications for imaging. Problematic with this approach was that various procedures were often deemed appropriate or inappropriate by a team of experts without the support of solid evidence. Guidelines by different organizations at times contrasted with each other creating some confusion among users. Additionally, regional variations in technology availability and professional expertise rendered the implementation difficult. As a result, utilization of appropriate imaging has been slow to occur and inhomogeneous even within the same country or region. However, appropriate implementation of imaging may benefit both physicians and patients in our rapidly changing medical environment.