

One Thing That Is Right about Healthcare

Nov. 8, 2013 is International Day of Radiology. One hundred and eighteen years ago, German physicist, Wilhelm Röntgen, discovered the X-ray. More recently, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT) scans have revolutionized medicine, virtually eliminating exploratory surgeries, reducing [unnecessary hospital admissions](#) and [shortening hospital stays](#).

Deaths from breast cancer and other serious illnesses have plummeted largely due to early diagnosis and treatment made possible by imaging scans. Most recently, lung CT scans were shown by clinical trials to significantly reduce lung cancer deaths among smokers. In response to the positive results generated from these trials, the ACR will issue CT lung cancer screening guidelines and standards. Nationwide, CT screening programs for lung cancer, including teams of health care providers from various medical specialties, will follow. These multidisciplinary screening programs will save tens of thousands of lives each year from the nation's leading cancer killer.

Not surprisingly, a National Bureau of Economic Research report shows that access to medical imaging is directly [linked to greater life expectancy](#). Americans with greater access to medical imaging scans live longer than those without. Scans are also among the most cost effective diagnosis and treatment tools in medicine. Despite an aging population that demands increasingly more health care services, Medicare spending on imaging scans is the same today as it was in 2003. The Health Care Cost Institute [reported](#) that imaging costs are the slowest growing of all physician services among the privately insured.

Millions of people worldwide are alive, and many more are enjoying a greater quality of life today, due to advances in medical imaging and radiation therapy. We live in one of the most successful technological and professional eras in the history of modern health care. No wonder the *New England Journal of Medicine* named medical imaging one of the top 10 medical advances of the last 1,000 years

So, while the news pages are full of what is wrong with healthcare, let's take a moment to recognize something that is definitely right. Nov. 8 is International Day of Radiology, but medical imaging and radiation therapy make a world of difference every day.



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