Lehigh Valley Health Network

Department of Emergency Medicine

Patient Attitudes Regarding Consent for Emergency Department Computed Tomography Scans

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Patient Attitudes Regarding Consent for Emergency Department Computed Tomography Scans

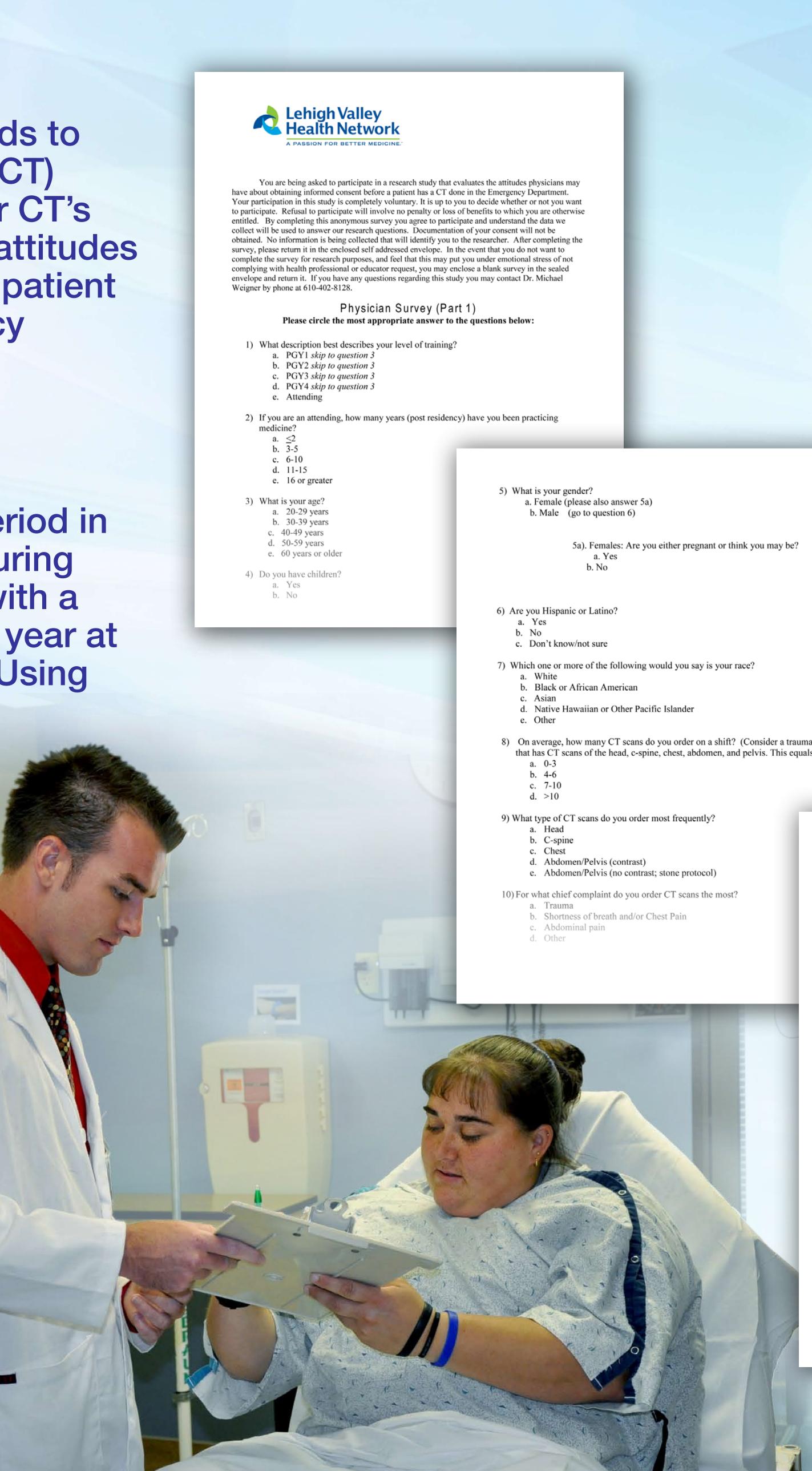
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Objective:

With increasing awareness of physicians and layperson in regards to the radiation exposure associated with computed tomography (CT) scans, it is unclear whether a formal patient consent process for CT's should exist. The existing literature does not reflect the current attitudes of patients regarding this important issue. We set out to assess patient attitudes about obtaining informed consent regarding emergency department (ED) CT scans.

Methods:

In this pilot study, surveys were distributed over a two month period in fiscal year 2010 by utilizing a convenience sample of patients during weekday hours in a tertiary, suburban level-one trauma center with a yearly census of 74,000 patients. Historically, in this same fiscal year at this site, patients received a CT scan on 25% of their ED visits. Using simple frequency and proportions, we evaluated patients' attitudes regarding obtaining informed consent prior to performing CT scans in the ED. After obtaining IRB approval, a convenience sample of approximately fifty surveys was obtained which represented a 90% return rate of surveys distributed. Either an ED registrar or a research assistant filled in the triage level on the survey and then gave the survey to the patient or patient's surrogate to complete. A brief explanation of the study was provided to ensure that participation was voluntary and that subjects were reassured as to the anonymity of their response. The survey consisted of seventeen yes/no or multiplechoice questions, five of which were demographic questions. When completed, the surveys were placed in a sealed envelope and returned to research staff or by mail to the research department.



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Results:

The median respondent age was 60 years or older, with a nearly even proportion of men to women (51%:49%). Ninety percent identified themselves as white or non-Hispanic or non-Latino. Ten percent identified themselves as black, African American or other. Ninety-eight percent identified english as his or her primary language. The majority (71%, 36/51) of survey respondents were high school graduates or had some college. Seventy-three percent (35/48) of the subjects did not expect to get a CT and 27% (13/48) did expect to receive a CT during their ED visit on the day they were surveyed. Seventy-three percent (36/49) of respondents felt that patients in the ED should give informed consent before they get a CT scan in the ED and eighty-six percent (42/49) felt either comfortable or very comfortable letting the ED doctor decide if a patient needs a CT scan. Only six percent (3/49) either had themselves or had known of anyone having a problem that was caused by a CT scan.

from the Emergency Department®

c. I don't know

) How often do you verbally discuss with the patient (or their representative he risks or benefits of having a CT done? a. Never b. Sometimes

c. Most of the time d. All of the time

Health care provider that results in the patient's authorization or agreement to undergo a specific medical intervention. Do you think that patients should give their informed consent before they get a CT scan in the Emergency Department?

14) Patients can give informed consent for CT's in different ways; Patients could just tell the physician that they agree to have the CT scan (ex. Verbal consent). Patients could be required to sign a paper right before they hav the CT scan that says they agree to have it (written consent specific to the CT scan they are to get in the Emergency Department). Or, patients could be required to sign a paper that says they agree to have the CT scan as part of the treatment for their health problem. This paper could be signed at anytime before the Emergency Department visit and include any CT scans that might be recommended by physicians treating the patient (general consent signed when the patient consented to be treated).

Which type of informed consent do you feel is appropriate for a CT scan in the Emergency Department? a. General consent signed when your patient consents to be treated

- b. Verbal consent specific to the CT scan your patient is about to have in the Emergency department . Written consent specific to the CT scan your patient is about to
- have in the Emergency departme d. I don't think the patients' informed consent is necessa

A PASSION FOR BETTER MEDICINE."

Conclusions:

Based on this pilot study, the majority of emergency department patients feel informed consent should occur before receiving a CT scan and most patients feel comfortable letting the doctor make the decision regarding the need for a CT scan.

