

SPECIALISTS

I Imaging Healthcare

The official newsletter of

With over 30 years of imaging services experience, Imaging Healthcare Specialists has earned an outstanding reputation for providing the highest quality medical imaging technology, highly specialized expertise and exceptional customer service to physicians and patients in San Diego and the surrounding communities.

THE FIRST IHS PODCAST

"THE PROSTATE MRI GUY" TO DEBUT THIS SPRING

This spring, The Prostate MRI Guy will air its first podcast hosted by Dr. Schwartzberg, one of the leading national authorities on multiparametric prostate magnetic resonance imaging (mpMRI). He supports and is passionate about getting the message out to all on how prostate MRI has been the missing part of the clinical equation regarding accurate prostate cancer diagnoses. There is a great deal of data to support this message, just last year, the American Urological Association began recommending mpMRI before a prostate biopsy for those at elevated risk for the disease.

"Since I've become the specialist at IHS for prostate MRI, some of the referring doctors have been referring to me as 'The Prostate MRI Guy.' So, when it came to coming up with a name for the podcast, we thought, well, that's perfect."

"Our goal is to start a much-needed dialogue about prostate cancer.

Each podcast will feature commentary from the radiologists at IHS involved with mpMRI, as well as doctors and patients throughout greater San Diego and elsewhere, as the prostate imaging program at IHS has attracted patients from all over the United States.

"Men don't like to talk about their prostates," Dr. Schwartzberg adds. "Our goal is to start a much-needed dialogue about prostate cancer. We'll talk about why it is so prevalent, why it is both over- and under-treated, and what we've learned since we started focusing on prostate imaging in 2014."

The Prostate MRI Guy will be available wherever you download your podcasts.

VOLUME 4 SPRING 2022 IN THIS ISSUE

The First IHS Podcast "The Prostate MRI Guy" to debut this spring!

Calcium Score Update After three decades of clinical

use, the benefits are indisputable.

Radiologist Spotlight Dr. Gary Spoto



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CALCIUM SCORE UPDATE:

AFTER THREE DECADES OF CLINICAL USE, THE BENEFITS ARE INDISPUTABLE

Coronary artery calcium (CAC) scanning has come a long way since Drs. Arthur Agaston and Warren Janowitz first published their technique for calcium scoring, which correlates the amount of calcified plaque in the coronary arteries to future coronary events, in 1990. Since that time, the test has been ridiculed, rejected, studied, embraced and praised in both clinical and mass media, leaving many physicians confused about how this technology is intended to play a role in patient care.

California physicians seemed to be ahead of their counterparts elsewhere in the United States when it came to using CAC scoring in clinical practice, with nearly all the leading health institutions in the state offering the exam. In addition, many of the early influencers and proponents of calcium scoring reside in California, and the ultrafast electron beam CT used to conduct the very first calcium score tests was a Bay Area innovation.

"Today, there is more evidence than ever demonstrating the value of CAC scanning in certain at-risk populations," says Dr. John O. Johnson, a radiologist at Imaging Healthcare Specialists. "The last decade has seen a number of important clinical studies that further demonstrate the usefulness of this test in better identifying risk, guiding therapeutic decisions and monitoring the effects of treatment." Dr. Johnson believes the calcium score is more useful than ever in the light of recent guideline changes that make almost half of Americans aged 40-75, and nearly all men over 60 eligible for statin (cholesterol-lowering) therapy. "Clearly all men over 60 don't have heart disease, so if there is an opportunity to accurately rule out those who don't to be on medication, it should be considered."

Although generally considered safe, statins can have pronounced side effects for many, including headache, difficulty sleeping, muscle aches, drowsiness, diarrhea and more. Some people have even reported neurological side effects, such as brain fog and memory loss.

"Statins are an important pharmaceutical option for patients who have, or who are at risk for, coronary artery disease," adds Dr. Johnson. "But if a patient doesn't have CAD, why give them a drug they don't need?"

In 2018 the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology updated their guidelines to recommend CAC scanning for certain at-risk patients to aid in the decision to use statin therapy. One of the reasons why is the calcium score's negative predictive value. Numerous studies have found that the absence of coronary calcium trumps other clinical risk factors regarding mortality and future cardiac "event" prediction in asymptomatic individuals.



Continued on next page »

Based on AHA/ACC guidelines

Continued from previous page »

During the early years of "heart scanning" as it is sometimes called, many doctors avoid recommending the test because of radiation exposure and the lack of consistency or "repeatability" of test results between scanners from different manufacturers. However, Dr. Johnson states that these are no longer factors. The newer generations of CT scanners have excellent accuracy and repeatability, and new low-dose protocols (many of which he initiated at IHS) have decreased radiation exposure without sacrificing image quality. "Using these protocols on the newer CT systems, the radiation exposure for CAC scanning is comparable to that of a mammogram," he adds.

Several clinical studies over the last decade have strengthened the argument in favor of CAC scanning. These studies and their conclusions are:

Jackson Heart Study 2015

In African Americans, coronary artery calcification (CAC) was associated with prevalent CVD. CAC scoring improved the diagnostic accuracy of the FRS by 14%.

Framingham Offspring 2016

CAC was most strongly associated with major coronary heart disease independent of Framingham risk factors and improved discriminatory value beyond risk factors for coronary heart disease.

CARDIA 2017

In adults 32 – 46 years, those with any CAC had a 5-fold increase in CHD events and a 3-fold increase in CVD.

CAC Consortium 2020

CAC was the most reliable predictor for long term mortality

In addition, a substantial body of evidence has emerged demonstrating that calcium scoring can achieve better stratification of risk in individuals with diabetes. CAC testing enables those at the greatest risk to be identified, who may benefit from screening for silent ischemia and from more aggressive forms of treatment.

Despite the overwhelming body of clinical proof and the incorporation of CAC scoring into guideline statements, most insurance plans do not yet cover this test. "It was nearly four decades before mammograms were universally covered by insurance," notes Dr. Johnson. "But when payers begin to see how CAC scoring can lower the overall cost of healthcare, saving the cost of both unnecessary medication and the more expensive treatments required with latestage disease diagnosis, I believe they will."

The good news is that the cost of the calcium score test at IHS is just \$99, making it affordable for most.

For more information visit imaginghealthcare.com/coronary-calcium-score or call 858-658-6500.

DR. GARY SPOTO CMO OF IMAGING HEALTHCARE SPECIALISTS

RADIOLOGIST SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Spoto joined Imaging Healthcare Specialists in 2010. He specializes in neuroradiology, musculoskeletal and magnetic resonance imaging. He is also a key member of the infection control committee at IHS.

He is a board-certified radiologist who earned his medical degree from the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). He received his undergraduate degree at the University of California, Davis (UCD) in biochemistry. After completing the Transitional Internship at Mercy Hospital in San Diego, he returned to UCSD for both his diagnostic radiology residency and a two-year neuroradiology fellowship.

Dr. Spoto is a staff radiologist at Scripps Mercy Hospital. Prior to IHS he practiced at OpenAir MRI Centers.



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Poway 12620 Monte Vista Road Ste A Poway, CA 92064

- La Jolla (Golden Triangle) 4150 Regents Park Row Ste 195 La Jolla, CA 92037
- Kearny Mesa (MRI Services Only) 3939 Ruffin Road Ste 102 San Diego, CA 92123

San Diego (Alvarado) 6386 Alvarado Court Ste 121 San Diego, CA 92120

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National City (MRI, Mammography & Ultrasound Only) 2427 Transportation Avenue National City, CA 91950

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11)

