Radiation Dose Management

The Problem
Traditionally, the Radiology department had a heterogeneous set of CT scanners across BIDMC, BID-Needham, Chestnut Hill and BID-Milton, each operating independently without external monitoring. This made it difficult to provide consistency in dose management (setting dose thresholds) among all systems, to compare performance to national indexes and to meet and document accreditation and regulatory requirements.

Aim/Goal
By designing and implementing a common external tracking system we aim to move from a system that requires a radiologist or technologist to recognize cases where dose thresholds are thought to be anomalous to a system that automatically identifies both systemic and individual anomalies, that compares all scanner dosage levels with industry benchmark values, and that documents and ensures the meeting of accreditation and regulatory requirements.

The Team
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The Interventions
- Install server based software to catalog dose data
- Program all CT scanners to send dose reports to server
- Create reporting tool to extract data from server
- Evaluate and present data at CT Quarterly QA meeting

The Results/Progress to Date
- Identified protocols where dose levels could be reduced without affecting image quality (chest pain, CT colon, CTA)
- Increased dose levels on brain perfusion studies to improve quality

Lessons Learned
- Each vendor’s scanner has different capabilities in presenting structured reporting and dose reduction features
- How to separate true triggers from data anomalies and known protocol deviations
- How to manage the system on a timely basis

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next:
- Continue to work towards a timelier review of triggers
- Look for additional opportunities to manage CT protocols across network
- Expand system to other diagnostic modalities such as fluoroscopy