Written by MDH
Friday, 07 December 2012 10:15

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is the first state health agency in the country to endorse a pair of coordinated, nationwide education campaigns aimed at improving the safety of x-rays and other medical imaging technology.

MDH will be collaborating with health care providers and professionals in the state to spread the message of ImageWisely®, which deals with medical imaging for adult patients, and ImageGently®, which focuses on the needs of children.

At the state level, MDH will be working on the two campaigns with the Minnesota Radiological Society (MRS), the North Central Chapter of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (NCCAAPM), and the Minnesota Society of Radiologic Technologists (MSRT).

"Our partnership with these organizations is critically important," said Dr. Edward Ehlinger, Minnesota Commissioner of Health. "They will play an essential role - along with the state's health care provider community - in implementing the best practices encouraged by ImageWisely and ImageGently."

ImageWisely and ImageGently focus on two different aspects of medical imaging, in order to minimize the radiation dose needed to meet the patient's medical needs, according to Dr. Parham Alaei of NCAAPM.

"The practices being encouraged through the two education campaigns emphasize, first of all, the importance of ensuring that the diagnostic procedures involved are medically justified," Dr. Alaei said. "That means the medical practitioners ordering imaging procedures which utilize x-rays need to carefully balance the potential radiation exposure risks with the benefits gained from these procedures.

"The other aspect focuses on the actual imaging process, where imaging professionals need to carefully balance actual exposure to ionizing radiation with the need to produce an acceptable image for interpretation and diagnosis," he noted.

MDH will be supporting the ImageWisely/ImageGently effort by continuing to ensure compliance with rules and regulations relating to the use of imaging equipment, including the proper credentialing of the people who use it. They agency will also be conducting education and outreach activities with imaging professionals and facilities, to help ensure that best practices are followed in using the equipment.

As part of the campaign, medical imaging professionals and facilities, professional organizations concerned with medical imaging, and health care providers who order imaging procedures are being asked to publicly "pledge" their support of the effort on the ImageGently website: http://www.pedrad.org/associations/5364/ig/
and ImageWisely website:
http://www.imagewisely.org/.

The expectation is that these health care organizations and practitioners will apply the "best practices" techniques and protocols developed by groups like the AAPM, the American College

of Radiology (ACR), and the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP).

Minnesota facilities that have already taken the pledge include the Center for Diagnostic Imaging in Alexandria, St. Cloud and Willmar; WestHealth in Plymouth; and Consulting Radiologists, Ltd. in Minneapolis.

MDH is the first state health agency to take the ImageWisely/ImageGently pledge.

The two educational efforts have a slightly different emphasis because of the different needs of adult and pediatric patients, said Dr. Joshua Simonson of the Minnesota Radiological Society.

"Children are generally the most vulnerable to the long term risks associated with radiation exposure," he said. "The issues addressed by the two campaigns reflect some of the key differences between adults and children."

While the major emphasis in both campaigns is on health care providers and professionals, the ImageWisely website includes information for patients, and the ImageGently site includes information for parents.

At the national level, ImageWisely is a joint effort of ACR, the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) and AAPM. Together, ACR and RSNA make up the Joint Task Force on Adult Radiation Protection.

ImageGently is a project of the Alliance for Radiation in Pediatric Imaging – or simply the ImageGently Alliance. Founded by the Society for Pediatric Radiology (SPR), AAPM, ACR and ASRT, the ImageGently Alliance now includes some 67 health-related organizations worldwide.