

TRA Imaging News

PRINTED FOR THE REFERRING PROVIDERS OF TRA MEDICAL IMAGING CENTERS

PET IN MANAGEMENT OF DEMENTIAS



Anthony E. Larhs, MD

Director of PET at TRA-Tacoma

Millions of Americans over age 50 have a secret fear that their memory is not what it used to be.

These fears may focus on the possibility of inevitable slides toward forgetfulness, increased difficulty in recalling names, or overall unclear thinking. The most dreaded outcome is Alzheimer's disease (AD). AD currently affects four million Americans and it is predicted that as many as 20% of people over age 65 will be affected by the year 2030.

“ **Anthony Larhs, M.D.**

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Clinical sensitivity for the diagnosis of Alzheimer's ranges between 59-83%. The limitation of conventional clinical work-ups that include CT and MRI scans of the brain, and also EEGs, is that many of the findings are being interpreted as normal or non-specific.

A non-invasive approach of molecular imaging, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), studies this disease much differently, relying on the analysis of regional brain consumption of glucose. This greatly increases PET's sensitivity in identifying the early changes that occur in AD, as compared to conventional imaging. The current

recommendation for patients who present with adverse changes in cognition or behavior is to obtain PET scanning early in the course of clinical work-up. This is especially important in behavior that has not been fully explained and/or reversed following standard diagnostic and treatment approaches.

The AD PET-signature is a consistent pattern of focally decreased cerebral metabolism that involves the neocortical association areas. This spares the basal ganglia, thalamus, and cerebellum; and cortex mediating primary, sensory, and motor functions. The incremental value in adding a PET scan to the diagnostic algorithm has a minimum diagnostic sensitivity of 90%. There is also the added benefit that a diagnosis can be made several years before confirmation clinically. Of further value, in patients who presented with cognitive symptoms of dementia, a negative PET scan indicated that pathological progression of cognitive impairment during a mean three-year follow-up was unlikely to occur.

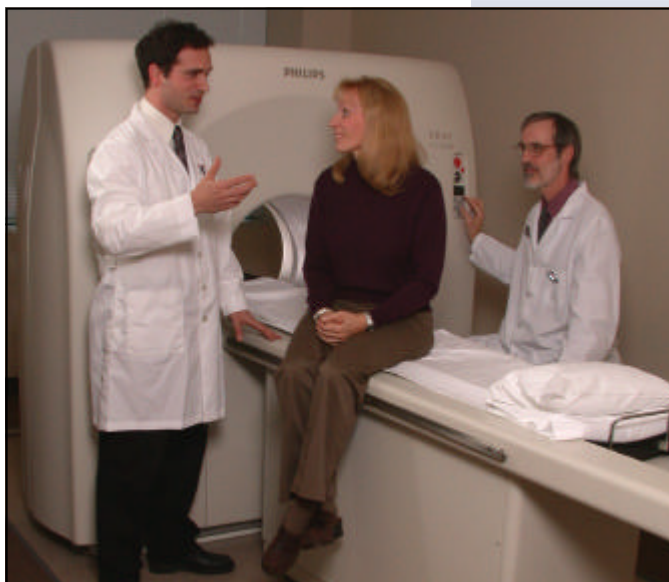
FOCUS ON:

Saturdays at TRA

TRA Medical Imaging Centers are now able to accommodate a wider range of your patients on Saturdays.

TRA-Tacoma, 2202 S. Cedar St., #200, is now able to offer CT exams with contrast from 10 am until noon on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Saturdays of the month. This office will continue to offer mammography appointments every Saturday from 8:30 - 11:30 am, as well as walk-in digital x-ray exams.

TRA Lakewood, 5919 100th St. SW, continues to offer mammography appointments from 8:30 - 11:30 am every 2nd Saturday of the month.



This information becomes even more pertinent, as AD is increasingly recognized as a pharmacologically treatable dementia. Clinical trials have shown that cholinesterase inhibitors can delay or improve decline in memory. Cholinergic agents have also been shown to be beneficial in improving patients' functional abilities and decreasing caregiver burden. This has caused a decrease by more than half in patients requiring nursing home placement over a given period of time. This reduction in costs related to improved care has also produced several economic models validating the cost of adding a PET scan to the current medical algorithm.

Furthermore, due to changing patient expectations documented in several surveys of elderly patients, the paternalistic approach adopted by many health care providers to protect their patients from possible psychological effects of AD diagnosis has been rejected. A majority of patients have expressed a desire to be informed of their condition, and may come to view failure of timely diagnosis of AD with the same gravity as failure to diagnose early malignancy.

Coming Up....



Web Server:
clinic.net's August arrival
 TRA's web server, clinic.net, will soon be able to expedite image distribution for TRA referrers. Beginning in August, referrers to TRA Medical Imaging Centers will be able to access their patients' radiology images minutes after they are obtained. In addition, providers will be able to access their patients' reports on-line.

TRA NEWS

TRA Imaging News is produced bi-monthly for referring providers of TRA- Medical Imaging Centers. It is designed to aid in the understanding of TRA and its services. If you have any questions, please contact the following:

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