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PET/CT Unleashed

The Central Valley's Dedicated PET/CT News Source

Spring 2009

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VMI Rolls Out Its Enhanced Website

New Features Designed to Help Referring Offices and Patients Alike

As our referring physicians move increasingly toward streamlining their practices and as more patients turn to the internet for information regarding their medical testing and treatment, we at VMI realized that we could better serve our patients and referring physicians alike by enhancing our website.

Our enhanced website, www.valleymetabolicimaging.com, is now available to help provide a variety of new useful features and tools:



For Our Patients

- office hours and location
- insurance information
- pre-imaging preparation instructions

We know your time is valuable...why not let VMI's website help save you time, and provide you with instant access to the tools you need to care for your patients? Feel free to share out website with your patients as well--they'll be glad you did!

If there are other items you'd like to see added to our website, please drop us a line at info@valleymetabolicimaging.com; we are always looking for ways to help serve you better!

For Our Referring Physicians

- patient referral forms
- on-line access to patient images
- printable patient instruction forms

View Your Patient's Scans On-line Through PETLinQ

Valley Metabolic Imaging (VMI) is pleased to announce the installation of PETLinQ technology. PETLinQ uses a secure web site to deliver PET/CT images and reports to any computer that has high-speed internet. **This means you'll be able to view your patient's images and reports anytime and anywhere within hours of the scan.** The technology also facilitates consults with other physicians. PETLinQ offers an on-line resource to referring physicians that is HIPAA compliant.

Viewing images in electronic form allows the presentation of the animated images that are so powerful in PET imaging. Think how convenient it will be to sit at your computer and review the results of your patient's scans. You can even request that your patient's images and report be e-mailed to you.

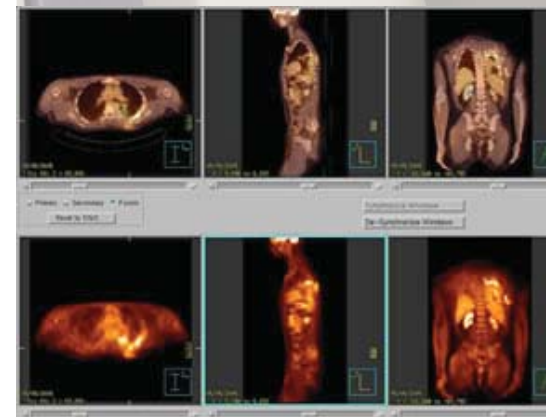
About PET/CT Images on PETLinQ

The most useful types of images to view on PETLinQ are the MIP (maximum intensity projection) and screen captures. The MIP is the 3D, rotating image of the whole body. It is important because it allows you to see through the entire body. If there is a hotspot, it will be evident on the MIP.

Fused PET/CT images provide greater anatomic detail and are found in the screen capture. Because of the fusing of the two technologies, the screen capture produces powerful photos that capture the details of a given abnormality. The appearance of the screen capture is optimized by experts at VMI, so that you do not have to do any further adjustments prior to viewing. A sample screen capture can be seen to the left.

You can also download DICOM images and burn CDs of the images and a viewer for your patients.

If you would like to set up a PETLinQ account and begin reviewing your patient's reports on-line, please call our office at 559-449-2640 or log onto our website valleymetabolicimaging.com.



VMI Earns Two ACR Accreditations

Valley Metabolic Imaging has been awarded a three-year term of accreditation in PET and CT Imaging as a result of a recent survey by the American College of Radiology (ACR). The accreditation programs are the most established and widely proven for all imaging modalities. For facilities committed to quality imaging, the ACR PET and CT Accreditation Programs provide a solid foundation for a continuous quality improvement.

VMI received these accreditations after a peer-review evaluation of the practice. Rigorous evaluations were conducted by board-certified physicians and medical physicists who are experts in the field. The PET and CT Accreditation Programs evaluate the qualifications of personnel, equipment, image quality, and quality control measures.

When you send your patients to VMI you can have confidence in our commitment to the highest level of patient care.



Medicare Expands PET Scan Coverage for Cancer Patients

In a long awaited decision announced in early April 2009, the centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a national coverage determination (NCD) which significantly expanded Medicare coverage for PET scans in patients with known or suspected malignancies.

“This is a major milestone in PET imaging,” said Daniel E. Stobbe, MD, FACNP, Medical Director at Valley Metabolic Imaging. “This will make it significantly easier for Medicare patients to obtain the benefits of PET imaging. As of today, PET imaging is covered for all Medicare patients for virtually all solid tumors, except newly diagnosed prostate carcinoma.”

The expansion and coverage was due in large part to the information obtained through the national oncologic PET Registry (NOPR), program which began in 2006. This program not only expanded PET coverage, but also gathered clinical information regarding the emerging use of PET in cancer patients.

The coverage expansion was praised by oncology patients, physicians caring for cancer patients, and cancer advocacy groups alike. “For years, physicians and researchers around the world have known that PET is an invaluable diagnostic tool for guiding management in patients with a wide range of cancers,” said Barry Siegal MD, co-chair of the NOPR working group and Chief of Nuclear Medicine at the Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology in St. Louis, Missouri. “The evidence contained in the NOPR study proved the effectiveness of PET as an essential part of the cancer patient’s treatment planning.”

Summary of Updated Medicare PET Coverage – April 2009

Medicare now covers PET Imaging for virtually all known or suspected solid tumors including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain • Head and Neck • Thyroid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ovary • Cervix • Testicular • Prostate (<i>except initial staging</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lung (<i>small cell or non small cell</i>) • Breast (<i>except pre-op staging of axillary nodes</i>) • Esophagus • Stomach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lymphoma • Myeloma • Melanoma (<i>except staging regional nodes</i>) • Sarcoma
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pancreas • Colon/Rectum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLUS: All other solid cancers not listed above are covered under the continuing NOPR program!

The new Medicare coverage will not only provide new coverage for patients with malignancies such as myeloma or ovarian carcinoma, but also expand previous coverage of PET imaging for patients with common solid malignancies such as colorectal, esophageal, breast, thyroid, and lung carcinomas.

CMS administrators were enthusiastic with their praise for the new PET coverage. “This expansion and coverage for PET scan shows that the Coverage with Evidence Development [CED] program is a success,” said CMS Acting Administrator Charlene Frizzera. “CED allowed us to cover an emerging technology, learn more about its usage in clinical practice, and adjust our coverage policies accordingly.”

Welcome Newest Staff Members

Because every patient is unique, custom planning and careful consideration goes into every imaging study conducted at VMI. Our newest technologists, Christine Lipe and Tracy Gilster are specialists in advanced imaging technology and work closely with VMI physicians to design the appropriate protocol for each patient. Both have extensive training, skills and licensure that make them uniquely qualified to administer the special radiopharmaceuticals used in PET/CT imaging and to operate our highly specialized equipment.



CMS will cover one FDG PET study for patients who have solid tumors that are biopsy-proven or strongly suspected based on diagnostic testing when the patient’s physician determines that it is essential for determining the location and/or extent of the tumor.



Tracy Gilster
Nuclear Medicine Technologist



Christine Lipe
CT Technologist

Tracy, her husband and their two kids moved to Fresno from New Zealand. Working as a travel tech, Tracy discovered Central California and she and her family decided to make it their home. Tracy has been a nuclear medicine technologist since 1993 and we are pleased to add her to the VMI team.

Chrissy, a native of the Central Valley, lives with her husband and children in Fresno. She has been a radiologic technologist since 1996 and thoroughly enjoys caring for patients. In addition to patient care, Chrissy has done a tremendous job of making sure that our imaging protocols are kept up-to-date.

We are so thankful to have Tracy and Chrissy as a part of the Valley Metabolic Imaging team and we are sure that you will enjoy working with them too.

VMI in the News

The Central Valley Edition of *M.D. News* featured VMI in February. The cover story talked about everything from the uses and limitations of PET imaging to insurance reimbursement and quick report turn around.

M.D. News is a new bimonthly publication designed specifically for physicians. Each issue covers clinical information along with business and lifestyle features. If you missed the article or would like more information about *M.D. News*, including a free subscription to the magazine, contact jevans@mdnews.com or call 559.351.6634.

