



www.cfpc.ca

Letters ♦ Correspondance

NEXUS study needs Canadian results

Drs Pulfrey and Evans address an important topic in the Critical Appraisal section of the June 2002 issue: use of radiography in blunt trauma to the cervical spine.¹ Their review of the study by the United States-based NEXUS group² is thorough, but their discussion of clinical implications is incomplete.

As part of their “bottom line,” Drs Pulfrey and Evans assert, “Application of the five-criteria decision instrument could reduce the annual number of cervical-spine radiographs taken by about 12%.¹ This could be true in many American jurisdictions where the rate of cervical-spine radiography is generally higher than in Canada. Applying these criteria in Canada could in fact increase the number of cervical-spine x-ray examinations performed.³”

The authors also point out that the NEXUS criteria require substantial clinical judgment in each case. The recently published Canadian Cervical-Spine Rule³ uses clearly defined criteria that require less interpretation on the part of clinicians and yet have equal sensitivity (100% vs 99.6%) and better specificity (42.5% vs 12.9%) for identifying cervical-spine fractures than the NEXUS criteria.

We appreciate that the authors’ primary task was to review the NEXUS study; however, failing to put the results into a Canadian context and omitting any mention of the Canadian

Cervical-Spine Rule could leave readers with an incorrect and incomplete understanding of the available evidence concerning this important topic.

—Merril Pauls, CCFP(EM), MHSC

—Mary-Lynn Watson, CCFP(EM)

Halifax, NS

by e-mail

References

1. Pulfrey S, Evans MF. Blunt trauma. Which patients require diagnostic imaging of the cervical spine? [Critical Appraisal]. *Can Fam Physician* 2002;48:1061-2.
2. Hoffman J, Mower W, Wolfson A, Todd K, Zucker M. Validity of a set of clinical criteria to rule out injury to the cervical spine in patients with blunt trauma. National Emergency X-Radiography Utilization Study Group. *N Engl J Med* 2000;343:94-9.

3. Stiell IG, Wells GA, Vandemheen KL, Clement CM, Lesiuk H, De Maio VJ, et al. The Canadian C-spine rule for radiography in alert and stable trauma patients. *JAMA* 2001;286(15):1841-8.

Is it really malpractice?

Iwould like to comment on Dr Alan Kaplan’s editorial¹ on inadequately controlled asthma. I found this article to be very informative. However, I object to the statement, “Not to at least give a patient with the triad of ASA allergy, asthma, and nasal polyps a trial of a leukotriene receptor antagonist would in my opinion be malpractice.” Clearly, I agree with the treatment recommended. I just think it is not right to cry malpractice in an article in which the author is trying to educate, inform, and improve the delivery of health care.

I first heard this type of judgmental statement many years ago, at a conference in which the speaker said, “...in my opinion, it’s malpractice to give Demerol for migraines,” at a time when probably most of the audience was still using Demerol. Every conference participant got the point, but I suspect that many found the statement arrogant and insulting. From an educational point of view, this is counterproductive. Practices do change as a result of all types of information campaigns, but I think that claiming malpractice because newer strategies are still underemployed is a bit exaggerated. Dr Kaplan’s article was excellent, and he did not need to make that statement.

Make your views known!

Contact us by e-mail at letters.editor@cfpc.ca on the College’s website at www.cfpc.ca by fax to the Scientific Editor at (905) 629-0893 or by mail to *Canadian Family Physician* College of Family Physicians of Canada 2630 Skymark Ave Mississauga, ON L4W 5A4

...

Faites-vous entendre!

Communiquez avec nous par courrier électronique: letters.editor@cfpc.ca au site web du Collège: www.cfpc.ca par télécopieur au Rédacteur scientifique (905) 629-0893 ou par la poste *Le Médecin de famille canadien* Collège des médecins de famille du Canada 2630 avenue Skymark Mississauga, ON L4W 5A4