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Nuclear Medicine Department

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Dear Sir/Madam,

In response to draft Regulatory Guide DG-8015, I would like to make a few comments from a nuclear medicine perspective.

When a patient is hospitalized for ablation therapy following thyroidectomy, nursing staff as well as other ancillary staff are being exposed to radiation from a person in whom they have no personal, vested interest. If the person is sent home with >30 mCi, their family may receive in excess of 0.5 rem, in some cases, but this will likely be a one-time exposure from a person in whom they have a personal, vested interest. If basic guidelines are followed, the dose to the family can be minimized. I feel it is more prudent to expose the patient's family in a single treatment than to repeatedly expose nursing personnel unnecessarily. If the patient is unwilling or unable to follow the guidelines given, then that patient should be hospitalized until a reasonable predetermined activity level.

The calculation of dose to family members before release of a patient is an inordinate burden on already understaffed hospital personnel. These calculations are guesses at best and have little effect on true radiation safety. Hospitalizing iodine therapy patients is a tremendous waste of health care dollars. Using these calculation-based release criteria add to the financial waste, in personnel hours, as well as providing no more protection to family members than the already accepted discharge criteria. We need to be more financially prudent in this health care crisis when the risks to family members are indistinguishable from background risks.

Perhaps patients could be classified into categories based on such criteria as number and age of people in the household, the size of the home, whether a room can be made available for the patient to be away from other household members, ability and willingness to follow radiation safety guidelines, etc. Rather than creating paperwork, a simple questionnaire can be filled out and the patient categorized by their contact with people. If the patient does not meet a minimum criteria, they must be hospitalized until below a predetermined activity level.

Thank you for your attention to these comments.

Sincerely,

Vincent A. McCormick, M.S.
Medical Physicist, Nuclear Medicine