



American Society of Nuclear Cardiology

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To the Editor:

In ("Me and My M.R.I.," Op-Ed, 7/6). David Levin, MD concludes that only radiologists are qualified to perform and interpret imaging studies on patients. He argues that "self-referral" for diagnostic imaging, which he defines erroneously as any imaging done by physicians in the private office setting, should be eliminated as this practice is motivated by financial gain.

Nuclear cardiology is a specialty that provides a noninvasive method for detection of heart disease and provides superb risk assessment of patients with known or suspected coronary artery disease. While radiologists and nuclear medicine physicians perform myocardial perfusion imaging and other nuclear cardiology tests, the field has undergone enormous development through scientific research and education, due for the most part, by the involvement of cardiologists. A cardiologist receives as much education during their three year fellowship as does a radiologist resident. However, many cardiologists then choose to do additional work in the field of nuclear cardiology, and receive special certification. Furthermore, cardiologists are uniquely suited to understand the true clinical value of nuclear cardiology, and its implications for management of patients with heart disease. Finally, most cardiologist who perform perfusion imaging do so in a high quality, cutting edge fashion and provide interpretation of these studies in a clinically relevant manner, something that is often lacking in radiologist's reports.

The American Society of Nuclear Cardiology welcomes all practitioners of nuclear cardiology, irrespective of background, but emphasizes quality, through education and the promotion of research. We understand that the field of radiology is threatened by the development of imaging specialists within a variety of medical disciplines. However, what is best for the patient must take precedent over the protective instincts of a specialty under stress.

Sincerely yours,

Robert C. Hendel, MD
President
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology