



Choosing Wisely – For Physicians – Part 2

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In the last newsletter we learned that 30 percent of our nation's annual healthcare budget is spent on unnecessary procedures. Choosing Wisely® aims to promote conversations between physicians and patients by helping patients choose care that is:

- Supported by evidence
- Free from harm
- Not duplicative of other tests or procedures already received
- Truly necessary

Here are a few more recommendations by specialty societies of “things that patients and physicians should question.” Using the above criteria, physicians are admonished:

- Don't use dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) screening for osteoporosis in women younger than 65 or men younger than 70 with no risk factors. (AAFP)
- In patients with low pretest probability of venous thromboembolism (VTE) obtain a high-sensitive D-dimer measurement as the initial diagnostic test; don't obtain imaging studies as the initial diagnostic test. (ACP)
- In the evaluation of simple syncope and a normal neurological examination, don't obtain brain imaging studies (CT or MRI). In patients with witnessed syncope but with no suggestion of seizure and no report of other neurologic symptoms or signs, the likelihood of a central nervous system (CNS) cause of the event is extremely low and patient outcomes are not improved with brain imaging studies. (ACP)

All of the listed procedures are unnecessary, unsupported by evidence or associated with harm – unless very specific risk factors are present. As healthcare delivery becomes increasingly performance-based, the mantra of “improving outcomes while eliminating waste” must be shared by employers, patients and providers.

Take a few minutes to review the lists of your specialty society to see common procedures and tests that have been shown to be wasteful. Engaging in a brief discussion with your patients can improve outcomes while lowering costs for everyone. It's time to insist on Choosing Wisely.

See your specialty society recommendations: <http://www.choosingwisely.org/doctor-patient-lists>