

Radiation Safety Awareness

One of the great advances in modern medicine is the use of imaging, such as X-rays and CT scans, to diagnose and treat injury and illness. Some types of imaging expose patients to small amounts of radiation. While these exposures carry some minor risk, the risks are outweighed by the benefits of an accurate diagnosis.

Despite the clear benefits of medical imaging, radiation exposure has been a topic of concern. Overlake is committed to the safest possible use of radiation and our patients' well-being is our highest priority.

Last year, Overlake was one of just six hospitals nationwide to win a Putting Patients First grant from Toshiba American Medical Systems. The \$7,500 grant enabled us to create the TRACE program—Tools for Radiation Awareness and Community Education.

“The TRACE program is designed to help our patients and the community understand the safe use of radiation, and to become more active participants in their own healthcare,” says vascular interventionalist and neuroradiologist Mark Pflieger, MD, president of Overlake Imaging Associates.

The first phase of the program, launched in early 2011, emphasizes patient education. Informational posters are displayed throughout the hospital, and a brochure that explains Overlake's safety procedures and addresses common concerns is available to all patients.

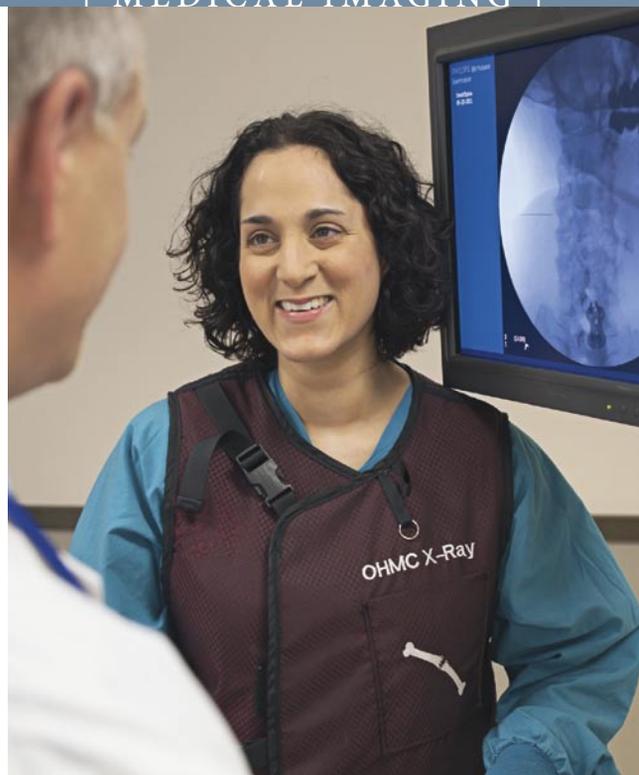
The brochure includes a chart where patients can track the amount of radiation they receive. Besides empowering patients with the ability to monitor their own radiation doses, the chart helps physicians

and technologists keep radiation exposure to a minimum.

Overlake also now provides each patient with a letter prior to his or her procedure, explaining the amount of radiation the patient will receive. The letter includes an assessment of risk, ranging from negligible to moderate, so patients know exactly what to expect.

Overlake also is focusing on a type of imaging called fluoroscopy (continuous X-ray imaging), which generates more radiation than traditional X-rays and most CT procedures. Fluoroscopy is used in some surgeries, interventional procedures and gastrointestinal series. Under the TRACE guidelines, the physician operating the equipment will be informed as radiation levels hit three measurement benchmarks. This enables physicians to monitor a patient's accumulated radiation exposure and keep the patient's other doctors up to date as well.

Overlake's TRACE program is making medical imaging safer than ever. More improvements aimed at reducing radiation doses will be introduced over the next two years, says Overlake's Director of Medical Imaging, Brenda Rinehart. “We're excited about launching this program. By educating patients and the larger community, involving patients in their own radiological care, and creating greater awareness of radiation doses among our physicians, Overlake is setting the standard for radiation safety.”



Overlake's medical staff is committed to educating patients about radiation exposure.