IN THE ORTHOPEDIC SETTING

Clinician Resource

When is Imaging Indicated?

Presence of red flags¹⁻²

history of cancer, signs of cauda equina, myelopathy, infection, or instability

Prior trauma²⁻⁵

Indicated by criteria such as Canadian C-Spine rules, Nexus, Ottowa Ankle, etc.

Failure of conservative treatment¹

no change or worsening symptoms after 8 weeks

Preprocedural information¹

specific anatomical information for surgery, injection, etc

Effects of Imaging on Outcomes

In individuals with acute, workrelated radicular and non-specific low back pain, obtaining early-MRI (≤30 days) led to significantly...

- Longer lengths of disability
- Increased medical costs

when compared to those who did not receive imaging.⁶



Heeding Caution with Imaging

MRI and other imaging techniques have become highly specific. They can reveal anatomical abnormalities that do not correlate with symptoms and are commonly found in asymptomatic population^{1,8,9-11}

This leads to a "medicalization" of many normal morphologies, which may lead patients to seek intensive, curative treatments, delaying functional restoration through rehabilitation.¹

References

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