

# An approach for determining if your patient is pregnant: Results from a Delphi Study



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## BACKGROUND

Diagnostic nuclear medicine procedures expose the patient to ionizing radiation which has the potential to cause biological effects in the foetus (1,3).

The use of hybrid imaging techniques incorporating computed tomography (CT) with nuclear medicine imaging is increasing and these procedures have the potential to dramatically increase the exposure to both the patient and any unknown foetus (2,3).

## AIM

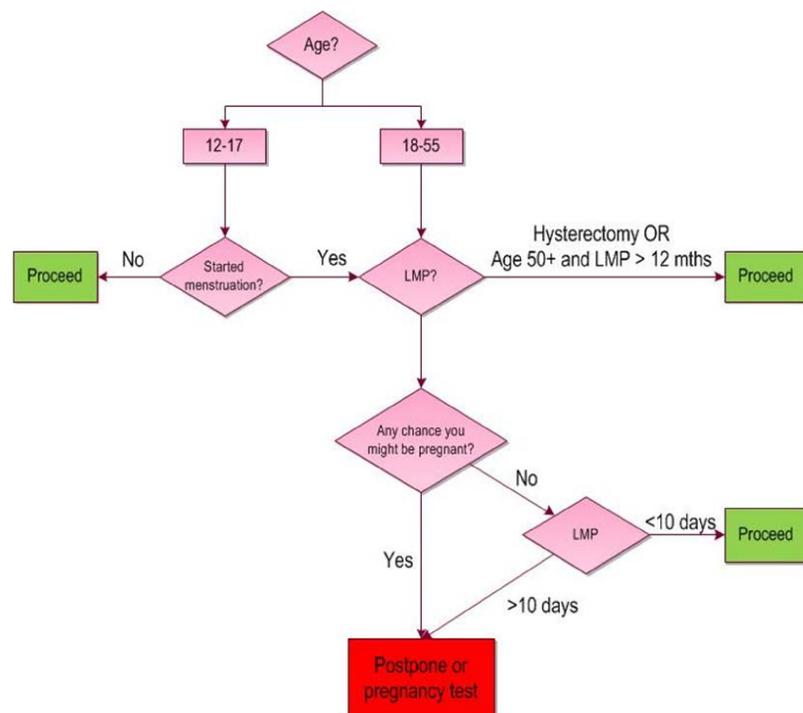
To develop consensus statements which will provide a consistent approach to questioning female patients about their pregnancy status and help avoid unnecessary foetal irradiation.

## METHOD

- University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee (H-2009-0270)
- 3 round Delphi technique (4,5)
- Online questionnaires
- Experts from Australia and New Zealand invited to participate
- Consensus defined as >80% agreement

## RESULTS

- Delphi rounds from Dec 2013 to June 2014
- 10 expert panellists
- 7 consensus statements developed
- Childbearing age range was defined as 12-55 years
- Flowchart for questioning developed



## CONSENSUS STATEMENTS

- If possible, when a teenage girl is accompanied by a parent or other adult, they should be taken to another room, without the parent, to be weighed for radiopharmaceutical dose calculation and questioned then.
- Teenage girls from age 12 to 17 years should be asked if they have begun menstruating and if yes, then questioned regarding pregnancy status.
- For girls aged 12-17 years, ask if they have begun menstruating.
  - If no, proceed with examination.
  - If yes, continue with standard questioning
- The term "*culturally and linguistically diverse*" can be used to describe women who differ according to religion and spirituality, racial backgrounds and ethnicity as well as language.
- Whenever possible, a female staff member should question women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds about their pregnancy status.
- If available in a reasonable time, serum pregnancy testing should be used in preference to urine pregnancy testing.
- If urine pregnancy testing is used PRIOR to the date of missed menses and the result is NEGATIVE, postpone the examination until menstruation begins.

## DISCUSSION

The statements recommend the use of verbal questioning with documentation via the patient signature, define the age range to question, provide strategies for teenagers and other potentially difficult groups, and advice regarding the use of pregnancy testing.

## CONCLUSION

Implementation of this simple and consistent approach should identify the majority of pregnancies, limit the number of pregnancy tests required, and reduce inadvertent foetal exposure from diagnostic nuclear medicine procedures.

## REFERENCES

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