From head to toe: Deep insights from whole body MRI

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Thanks to technical progress, there are now new areas in which whole body magnetic resonance imaging (WB-MRI) can be used. In the current edition of *Deutsches Ã„rzteblatt International* (*Dtsch Arztebl Int* 2010; 107[22]: 383-9), Gerwin Schmidt and his coauthors present a review of possible uses, together with the limits of this radiation-free diagnostic procedure.

Whole body MRI is suitable for routine use in hospitals, as the procedure takes less than an hour and the images are of high resolution. The technique provides detailed images of different organ systems without exposing the patient to ionizing radiation, which is particularly advantageous in oncology. With the help of different sequence techniques and contrast media, the examination protocol can be optimized to give highly detailed results.

The procedure has already demonstrated its value in the M-staging of tumors, as the diagnostic reliability is 93% to 97%. As WB-MRI provides high contrast images of bone marrow it is a particularly effective and low stress examination for patients with multiple myeloma. Whole body MRI is particularly advantageous for types of cancer which tend to form distant metastases, such as mammary or colorectal carcinoma.

The authors advise against non-specific screening with whole body MRI, as the expected benefit is too low. The procedure can nevertheless be used in effective therapy planning for groups at risk, even when there is no specific suspicion. This is supported by studies on patients with long-term diabetes mellitus, who are at increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

SOURCE [1]

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