Radiation safety awareness and practice among Iranian cardiology and radiology residents/fellows

To the Editor,

There are limited reports in the literature addressing radiation safety awareness and practice in post-graduation educational groups including cardiology and radiology residents/fellows (1, 2). In this target population, there are some unanswered questions about their awareness/practice of radiation protection. These include the educational courses offered by the universities for residents about radiation exposure and its risks, the current state of safety devices usage, awareness about hazardous radiation risks, being familiar with international guidelines in this regard, and the like. Hence, we decided to study the awareness and practice of a sample of Iranian cardiology and radiology fellows/residents about radiation safety protocols and using protective devices against radiation. For this reason, we gathered the required data using a pre-designed questionnaire from 725 cardiology or radiology residents/fellows.

Only ten percent of the sample had attended radiation protection training programs. Eight percent had information about the amount of radiation they received during the preceding year. Only less than four percent (3.7%) of the participants reported that complete blood cells (CBC) checking had been performed in their educational centers and 18.1% of them personally checked their CBC. Thyroid collars, lead shielding and radiation badges were commonest radiation protection devices. Most (67%) of them advocated that in their journal clubs they reported that such discussions are made regularly in their academic meetings and 30.5% reported this as being occasional. They reported that 17.9% of their professors usually did not respect to international protocols such as ALARA (as low as reasonably achievable) strategy. Only 21.7% of them were aware about radiation rules within pregnancy period. A few numbers of residents/fellows (11.7%) were aware of any radiation protection guidelines in the textbooks and among them 38% used the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization guideline for radiation protection. Near to one third (29.8%) of the survey respondents read some references about radiation impact on human life themselves. Among the respondents, only 7.9% reported that there was “a defined instruction document about dealing with radiation and its protection” in their center and most of them (65.8%) were not aware about radiation protection instruction in their center.

Radiation exposure might lead to major adverse impacts on clinical practitioner especially clinical cardiologists and radiologists. Cardiology and radiology residents/fellows are exposed to higher levels of radiation than faculty members due to their educational role in health care system (3). Some researchers reported that in addition to inadequate training, some other causes such as discomfort of using protective devices and fear of impairment of image quality due to reduced time of radiation process were responsible for lower awareness of cardiology and radiology residents/fellows. Awareness/practice of Iranian cardiology/radiology residents/fellows about radiation exposure safety issues is not

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Address for Correspondence: Dr. İlhami Ünlüoğlu, Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sağlık Hizmetleri Mesleki Yüksekokulu, Ilk ve Acil Yardım Programı, Meşelik Kampüsü, 26480 Eskişehir-Türkiye.
Monocuspidalisation of the mitral valve can be a solution for ischemic mitral regurgitation

To the Editor,

Mitral valve repair is the preferred treatment for patients with mitral valve regurgitation (MR); however almost one third of all diseased mitral valves cannot be repaired (1). This ratio is even worse in patients with ischemic MR (2). Ischemia and resultant segmental or global left ventricle dilatation results in restriction of posterior leaflet motion. Tethering of the posterior leaflet (Type IIIb MR) makes it unavailable for coaptation with the anterior leaflet in the absence of structural damage to the valve (3). The standard surgical approach to attain competence is revascularization and remodeling of the mitral valve annulus with a restrictive annuloplasty. Downsizing or 2 sizes does not relieve tethering but shifts the posterior annulus anterior to achieve coaptation (2, 3). Early results are generally satisfactory but unfortunately further remodeling of the left ventricle cause a deterioration of the regurgitation during the first six months following the procedure. Restrictive annuloplasty is also accompanied by the risk of functional MV stenosis (4). As the conventional repair of ischemic MR can be suboptimal with high recurrence rates, many surgeons prefer mitral valve replacement (MVR) which means “Replacing a disease with another!”. A new device called MitrofixTM can be an option to restore mitral valve functions where the posterior leaflet is partially or completely dysfunctional as in ischemic MR. It is a bio-posterior leaflet that imitates a closed posterior mitral valve. Using the device results in monocuspidalisation of the mitral valve by preserving the anterior leaflet and the subvalvular apparatus. As the anterior leaflet contributes 70% of the mitral valve effective orifice area (EOA), the resultant EOA is much more than what we expect for restrictive annuloplasty or MVR (5).

We have been using this device in ischemic MR since July 2013 and our initial experience is much more than satisfactory. The device was successfully implanted in 6 patients and the early intraoperative and postoperative echocardiography demonstrated none or trivial residual MR in 5 of them and 1-2 + in one. Importantly, the mean EOA measured was 2.26 cm², with a mean gradient of 4.5 mmHg during the first postoperative control before discharge. Our results are comparable with the results of Oertel et al. (5), who published first multicenter study using this device in 2012.

We still don’t know the long term follow up but Mitrofix™ has some theoretical advantages in the long term. Such advantages include avoidance of anticoagulation and fewer recurrence of MR since further remodeling of left ventricle (LV) will not affect the bio-posterior leaflet and the valve will become competent unless anterior leaflet functions improperly. We are thus coming to a conclusion that total monocuspidalisation of the mitral valve (Restore rather than repair) can be a solution for ischemic MR in near the future; we believe awareness of this treatment option should increase among cardiac surgeons and cardiologists.

Fuat Büyükbayrak, Taylan Adademir, Cihanbir Kayzam*, Mete Alp Clinic of Cardiovascular Surgery and *Cardiology, Kartal Koşuyolu Yüksek İhtisas Education and Research Hospital, İstanbul-Turkey

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Address for Correspondence: Dr. Taylan Adademir, Kartal Koşuyolu Yüksek İhtisas Eğitim ve Araştırma Hastanesi, Kardiyovasküller Cerrahi Kliniği; Cevizli, Kartal, İstanbul-Türkiye
Phone: +90 505 628 87 04 Fax: +90 216 500 15 00 E-mail: taylanadademir@gmail.com
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