Effective Health Care

Upright MRI
Nomination Summary Document

Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- Upright MRI is not feasible for a full systematic review due to the limited data available for a review at this time; however, it will be considered for a potential technical brief by the Effective Health Care (EHC) Program.

- To see a description of a technical brief, please go to http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/research-for-policymakers-researchers-and-others/.

- If this topic is developed into a technical brief, key questions will be drafted and posted on the AHRQ Web site. To sign up for notification when this and other EHC Program topics are posted, please go to http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/join-the-email-list1/.

Topic Description

Nominator: Individual

Nomination Summary: The nominator questions the comparative effectiveness of upright vs. conventional MRI in diagnosis of patients with spinal pain and scoliosis. He is interested in whether imaging with upright MRI leads to better surgical outcomes.

Key Questions from Nominator: None

Considerations

- The topic meets EHC Program appropriateness and importance criteria. (For more information, see http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/submit-a-suggestion-for-research/how-are-research-topics-chosen/.)

- Low back pain is one of the most common reasons for visiting a healthcare provider.

- Conventional supine magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) has an established role in the assessment of spinal disorders; however, some of its findings, such as stenosis and disc herniation, have both high

false-positive and false-negative rates. The proposed advantages of upright MRI are based on the ability to scan the spine (or joints) in different positions (including the position where clinical symptoms are more pronounced) and assess the effects of weight bearing, position, and dynamic movement. The vertical and open nature of upright MRI may also allow claustrophobic patients to be imaged without prior sedation.

- A small amount of data on the effectiveness and comparative effectiveness of upright MRI has been published. No comprehensive evidence review was identified that addresses all of the current research in this area. This topic may be appropriate for a technical brief depending on the importance and diffusion of this technology.