

Unnecessary medical testing doing more harm than good for patients?

Unnecessary tests could be causing harm - and injury - to patients.

Advances in healthcare have led to the development of many in-depth diagnostic and condition management tests. Over time, many of these tests, including X-rays and PET scans, can expose patients to potentially harmful levels of radiation. Other types of procedures are more invasive and can lead to even more testing without positive result. The tests may also lead to a course of treatment that doesn't improve the quality of the patient's life.

In this era of "defensive medicine," it is important to understand that the tests your doctor wishes to perform on you may be more for his benefit rather than yours. The doctor or hospital may have a financial state in these tests. They may also be attempting to avoid liability for negligence. These defensive tests generate money for clinics and physicians by way of insurance payments or kickbacks from pharmaceutical companies. Some physicians practice defensive medicine so as to avoid potential [malpractice](#) claims. Hoping to stave off allegations of malpractice in the future, they order potentially unnecessary and risky procedures just to shield themselves from liability. This practice may be just as hazardous as not performing any tests at all.

Diagnostic testing may, however, be the proper course of action in many circumstances. If a patient is bleeding internally from an accident, tests must be performed to determine the source of the bleeding and how best to correct the problem. In such an instance, testing may save the patient's life. However, in other cases, the patient may suffer greater harm because the test itself is hazardous or unneeded. Unnecessary testing can lead to a [misdiagnosis](#), or it may lead to a treatment that doesn't benefit the patient.

A recent study of back pain patients illustrates this effect: the study found that back pain patients who received an MRI within the first month of their symptoms were eight times more likely to undergo surgery than those who did not. The study found that the patients who underwent surgical procedures didn't get relief any faster than their non-surgical counterparts. In this study, the drastically more invasive approach of spinal surgery led to no difference in the patient's time to get relief versus those patients who waited and kept a close eye on their symptoms.

As a patient, it is important to remember that you have the right to refuse testing and procedures. Being your own advocate may be the best way to avoid being injured by the same doctors who you trust to heal you. It is important to listen to your doctor and make sure he/she has a clear explanation of how the procedure will benefit you. Your doctor may also have a less-invasive alternative that can produce the same results. It is up to you to make the most informed decision in your best interests. Speak to your doctor about all of the benefits and risks of any major procedure, and whether or not you should proceed forward. If, however, a physician's negligence, errors or unnecessary testing led to you being hurt, you do have legal rights. To learn more about taking action to hold doctors, nurses or other care providers responsible for your injuries, [contact](#) the law office of Raymond J. Slomski today.