Greatest Technology” needs to be carefully assessed before accepting such claims to be true. Economics may not provide all the answers in the evaluation process, but will surely show the way for right questions to be asked for rational and consistent decision-making. The authors do not contest the technological superiority of 3T MRI machine, particularly for its exceptional imaging and research capabilities in neurosciences. However, every technology acquisition must be viewed from a System Concept, where mission fulfillment as well as Life-cycle cost will be expressed in various Figures-of-Merit (FOM) for arriving at the right decision in a particular organization. The authors agree that a 3T machine with a higher magnet strength and larger aperture diameter would be beneficial. However, changes in the major hardware components were not considered within the scope of the manuscript.

Assessment of high-end technology will always remain a challenge, particularly in the resource-constrained environment of a developing economy and Life-cycle costing is a time-tested viable tool that may be utilized to take right decisions when faced with competing claims from the market.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I read with considerable interest the original article titled “Life cycle costing as a decision making tool for technology acquisition in radio-diagnosis” by Chakravarty et al published in Med J Armed Forces India 2014; 71: 38–42.¹ Having worked with both 1.5T and 3T MRI, it was interesting to read your well conceived article on MRI life cycle costing. I have a few practical points to make.

Better coil technology and other factors have significantly improved 1.5T image qualities and it is still the practical choice while setting up a new MRI facility in our armed forces set-up.

However, a 3T machine is much better at functional brain imaging specially spectroscopy for metabolite spectral resolution and for MR Angiography. 3T MRI offers a definitely higher MRI image resolution for identifying structural changes in joint imaging. These are the two key areas which need interrogation so frequently in our serving population. Vascular imaging may need lesser contrast in 3T compared to 1.5T, offsetting the unit scan cost to some extent. Better SNR at 3T practically obviates the need for endocavitary coil use, further increasing patient experience and comfort.

However, to produce the best results out of the machine, we will need better trained and dedicated technicians to produce

the best out of the 3T machine, something which usually becomes almost impossible, given our service constraints.

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Reply

Dear Editor,

We thank the reader for showing interest in our article. We agree that a 3T MRI machine is technologically superior as

compared to a 1.5T MRI machine in certain aspects as has been mentioned by the reader and as also explained in table of the article. The main purpose of the article was not limited to direct technical comparison of 1.5T MRI machine with a 3T

MRI machine rather how to arrive a decision matrix before investment in high end technologies like MRI machines.

We would also like to draw attention of our readers that life-cycle costing methodology utilized in the paper can be used as a template for variations of the costing exercise, depending on the situational contingencies and technological imperatives. Hence, the reader can modify the costing exercise as per his needs, remaining within the main concept of evaluating high-cost technology like the MRI scan machines with the Total cost visibility approach over the entire life-cycle of the technology for efficient use of precious resource. Further, the importance of certain intangible Figures-of Merit in the evaluation process needs to be kept in consideration while assessing Medical Technology.

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