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THE ROLE OF IMAGING IN SCREENING SPECIAL FEATURE: EDITORIAL

The role of imaging in screening special feature

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This special feature focuses on the increasingly important topic of imaging in screening and surveillance. Screening involves testing asymptomatic populations for the presence of a disease in order to improve the outcome of that disease or to prevent it. In surveillance, people with pre-existing conditions that predispose to a disease are tested. Both screening and surveillance produce a mix of potential benefits and harms. Professionals require a clear understanding of the balance of these benefits and harms, how to optimise the benefits and how to minimise unwanted effects of screening. There is an increasing focus on communication with the individuals to be screened, ensuring their comprehension of possible outcomes and truly informed consent to the screening pathway, not just the individual imaging test.

This themed collection of articles contains a mix of commentaries, reviews and full research papers. Some of the areas

are already the subject of national population screening programmes in Britain and in other countries. These include: breast cancer screening, colon cancer screening and abdominal aortic aneurysm screening. In other areas there is considerable interest and debate about whether screening or surveillance programmes should be launched and how they should be undertaken. Prostate, lung, carotid artery stenosis, ovarian cancer, metastatic disease and hepatocellular carcinoma are examples. There are also themes that apply across all screening activity which are covered in a series of commentaries: the principles and practice of screening and surveillance, handling large datasets, logistics and workflow, and the application of duty of candour to screening harms. This is an interesting, informative and thought-provoking collection of articles; I commend it to you.