

EDITORIAL

Radiation protection vs research interests

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Every once in a while, DMFR receives submissions that raise concerns about radiation doses. Such complaints are even more common and understandable if the article deals with the paediatric application of ionizing radiation for imaging purposes. A strict requirement in the Instructions for Authors is that authors should always obtain ethical approval for studies in which patients are exposed to ionizing radiation. Often, concerns remain even in cases where approval has been obtained by the authors. This is particularly so in cases involving children or teenagers. In general, such papers do not have a good chance of being published in the journal. However, recently, one such paper was published in DMFR¹ and instantly raised a heated debate among our readers. As editor of the journal, I fully agree with the Letter to the editor we received² in response to this publication. The author of this letter was seriously concerned about the fact that researchers carried out three cone beam CT scans on juvenile orthodontic patients. Regardless of the scientific content of the research paper,¹ this seems like an excessive use of ionizing radiation. An open debate about this controversial subject could be a very helpful measure to make authors outside the specialty aware of the rising concerns we have regarding

radiation doses in paediatric dental radiography. In this sense, publishing the article stimulated a long-lasting and ongoing debate. One may also argue, however, that research which gives rise to concerns regarding the radiation doses used, particularly if it involves paediatric patients, should never be published in the journal.

In either case, the discussion made public as a result will hopefully re-alert the entire readership of DMFR to this issue. As editors of DMFR, this applies to us too, and we will in future be even stricter in judging such submissions. I explicitly thank the author of the Letter to the editor² for publicly expressing his concerns.

In the light of year-on-year rising radiation doses in developed countries owing to the increased use of dose-intensive three-dimensional radiographic machines, we as specialists in the field should be particularly aware of this dangerous trend. In this area of conflict, we as editors have to find a good balance between avoiding publishing studies involving an excessive use of radiation and identifying and publishing research that could be of mutual interest.

Ralf Schulze
Editor

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