

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

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Abstract Title: Improving Access to Cardiovascular Screening Technology in Rural Communities

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Background: Cardiovascular disease confers a high mortality and morbidity in regional Australia. Early detection and screening of intermediate risk patients remains a crucial priority. Emerging technology such as Cardiac CT is the gold standard for atherosclerotic plaque detection and clinical prognostication. It has previously been difficult to access for rural patients in the Riverina until 2012.

Approach: From 2011-2012 five patients were referred to Sydney from the Murrumbidgee Local Health District for cardiac CT screening. We present the clinical experience of establishing a regional Cardiac CT Imaging service for 1439 patients from 2013 until 2017. Patients were assessed for their cardiovascular risk factors and rural remoteness and prospectively assessed for burden of disease and clinical outcome.

Outcomes / Results: Patients (N=1439) were assessed by specialist clinicians as being at least intermediate risk of cardiovascular disease or needing non invasive assessment of their coronaries prior to cardiac surgery. The patient protocols were safe and effective with only rare imaging related complications (<0.5% of all scans). Guiding principles of specialist referral and clinician supervised scans have lead to a highly effective and efficient regional centre for the detection and assessment of cardiovascular disease.

Take Home Message: The implementation of a cardiovascular CT imaging service in the Riverina has resulted in improved access to the gold standard of atherosclerotic disease detection. Additional benefits include the reduction in unnecessary invasive procedures and better targeting of medical and interventional therapy. We provide a guide to the safe and effective implementation of this new technology in a rural setting.