

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The recent WSJ report ("Heart Scans Sometimes Fail to Identify Blockage, Study Finds," Technology & Health, November 28), referring to the New England Journal of Medicine article assessing the diagnostic performance of coronary CT angiography (CCTA), failed to address for whom and for what this test was originally intended.

CCTA is not and has never been a substitute for invasive angiograms. Instead, it is used in lieu of other *non-invasive* imaging tests in patients who have symptoms of coronary artery disease (CAD) and an intermediate risk of obstructive CAD. In this light, it should be able to not only detect CAD, but also rule it out.

In a high risk patient population, such as in the CorE64 study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, CCTA performed equivalently to other non-invasive tests for detection of CAD. However, in the ACCURACY study recently published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, which focused solely on a patient population with an intermediate risk of CAD, CCTA performed better than other non-invasive tests for both detection and exclusion of CAD.

Both the CorE64 and the ACCURACY study were landmark trials which evaluated the diagnostic performance of CCTA. The combined data from both trials informs the medical community as to the patients who would most benefit from its use.

In respect to costs, also referred to in the article, the totality of evidence to date suggests that in this intermediate risk population without known cardiac disease, the use of CCTA (compared to all other methods of evaluation studied) saves money with equivalent or improved clinical outcomes. There is no evidence to date which suggests that a CCTA-based diagnostic strategy increases health care costs for individuals without known heart disease.

— Authored by Dr. James Min, assistant professor of medicine and radiology at Cornell's medical school and board member of the Society of Cardiovascular Computed Tomography; Dr. Daniel S. Berman, director of cardiac imaging at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and president of the Society of Cardiovascular Computed Tomography