Are therapeutic radiographers able to achieve a clinically acceptable match for stereotactic lung radiotherapy treatment (SBRT)?

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**Background**

SBRT for treatment of early stage peripheral non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) improves outcomes (1). However, daily on-line imaging is essential to ensure accuracy in delivery of these hypo-fractionated high-dose treatments (2,3). Currently in our department on-line verification of cone beam computerised tomography (CBCT) images for SBRT is performed by a clinical oncologist. The National Radiotherapy Advisory Group (NRAG) have recommended more effective use of the skilled multi-professional workforce to meet the demands of an ever expanding radiotherapy service (4). Utilising therapeutic radiographers to perform on-line verification improves efficiency but requires competency to be assessed before implementation.

**Aim**

To prospectively assess the accuracy of radiographer verification of CBCT images for SBRT treatment delivery.

**Standard**

The clinical oncologist’s verification match was taken as the audit standard. The indicator was defined as a radiographer match within 2 mm of the clinician’s with a target of 90% agreement.

**Methodology**

Five radiographers co-registered 22 CBCT images acquired at the first fraction of SBRT for 22 patients (Elekta Synergy, XVI R4.5). Displacements in each translation were compared to the clinical oncologist’s match.

**Results**

Agreement for all radiographers when compared with the clinical oncologist match was 94%, 91% and 89% in the right-left (RL) superior-Inferior (SI) and anterior-posterior (AP) directions respectively. Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (95% confidence interval) between radiographers were 0.87 (0.76 to 0.94), 0.74 (0.51 to 0.88), 0.88 (0.78 to 0.95) in the RL, SI and AP direction respectively. The average time taken for registration was 128 seconds. Tumour visualisation appeared to be affected by several factors including GTV size, tumour location within the thorax and chest wall thickness.

**Conclusion**

Suitably experienced therapeutic radiographers are able to verify CBCT images for thorax SBRT with comparable results to the ‘gold standard’ clinical oncologists’ match.

**Action plan**

- Development of an advanced competency training workbook using CBCT verifications which demonstrated consistent and inconsistent registrations.
- Local implementation of radiographer-led on-line image verification for SBRT.
- Re-audit after implementation to ensure competencies maintained.

**References**