

PATIENT ADVOCACY CORNER



POSITION STATEMENT ON IMAGE GUIDANCE

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As Chair of the Patient Advocacy Committee I am frequently asked to respond to issues related to the unfair business practices of insurance carriers. It is apparent to me that these unfair practices are pervasive throughout the specialty and the country and each and every carrier unleashes this unfair practice on members of the ARS and the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery.

Of the many calls and e-mails I have received, it is apparent to me that more problems appear to be occurring in the Northeast with the worst offender being Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

The ARS welcomes the opportunity to assist in problems related to Rhinology, but it is our policy to assist only members of the ARS. For this reason I would suggest otolaryngologists doing a significant proportion of Rhinology, seriously consider joining the ARS.

On a more positive note, the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at its most recent Board meeting in Los Angeles (September 28th, 2005), revised its position statement on computer-aided surgery.

This was at the request of the Rhinology and Paranasal Sinus Committee of the Academy following a recommendation of the ARS.

The revisions make note of the fact that “the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery endorses the intraoperative use of computer-aided surgery in appropriate select cases to assist the surgeon in clarifying complex anatomy during sinus and skull base surgery.”

This statement is important because it states that image guidance surgery is only necessary in the more complex cases of nasal and sinus surgery, in particular when involving the skull base, revision surgery, or sphenoid, frontal, and posterior ethmoid sinus disease.

“There is sufficient expert consensus opinion and literature evidence base to support this position.” This is an important inclusion in the position statement as many insurance carriers are denying reimbursement for image guidance surgery based on the fact that they claim there is insufficient expert opinion and insufficient literature to support its use.