



**T e c h n o l o g y
A s s e s s m e n t
P r o g r a m**

Office of Patient Care Services

UPDATED INFORMATION FOR VA TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (VATAP) REPORTS

In June 2000, VATAP was relocated within the Veterans Health Administration from the Office of Research & Development to the Office of Patient Care Services. The following report was produced prior to the relocation of VATAP.

Current VATAP contact information is as follows:

VA Technology Assessment Program (11T)

VA Boston Healthcare System

150 South Huntington Avenue

Boston, MA 02130

Tel: 617.278.4469 Fax: 617.264.6587

vatap@med.va.gov

<http://www.va.gov/vatap> <http://vawww.va.gov/vatap>

TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT BRIEF

Positron Emission Tomography Report #3

Contacts: Karen L. Flynn, DDS, MS, and Elizabeth J. Adams, RRT, MPH

Report Date: October 1996

Primary Objective: To assess VA's experience with and use of positron emission tomography (PET), and to determine whether VA should establish additional PET centers.

Methods Used: Surveys and site visits of VA PET centers to collect information on PET imaging utilization, center operations, and research activities; systematic review of published literature of PET in diagnosing selected cancers (head and neck, breast, lung, solitary pulmonary nodules, colorectal) and Alzheimer's disease.

Background: PET is a nuclear medicine imaging technology that is recognized as a valuable basic research tool, with possible clinical diagnostic applications. VA has made a substantial resource commitment to its PET imaging facilities.

Key Findings: VA researchers widely credited PET as an important basic research tool; • research into the clinical utility of PET for selected conditions is in its preliminary stages; • methodological weaknesses seriously limit the validity and generalizability of available evidence; • critical research into defining the clinical consequences of using PET for diagnosis has yet to be performed or reported; • a wide range of research and clinical activities in VA PET centers remain largely uncoordinated.

Conclusions/Recommendations: VA should not invest in additional PET centers at the present time. Rather, it should maximize the value of its existing commitment, which could include:

- implementing a VA PET registry;
- organizing a cooperative group of VA PET centers and their academic affiliates to identify research needs and design multi-center studies;
- supporting rigorous, prospectively designed studies that expand the body of PET literature in a manner that is methodologically sound; and
- submitting currently unpublished data from studies of high methodologic quality for peer review.