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**Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed
Submission**

IS SUDDEN DEATH FROM A HEART ATTACK PREVENTABLE ?

*NEW TECHNOLOGIES
SHOULD BE SUPPORTED TOWARD
EARLY HEART CARE STRATEGY*

Tim Russert's sudden and untimely death from cardio thrombosis has been sadly mourned and vigorously discussed in recent days. While millions of viewers of Russert's Sunday program "Meet the Press" and the media itself grappled with the news of his death, many in the medical community began to dissect the clinical cause and whether it was preventable.

We believe that in the near future it could be prevented. And it should be. Early and safe cardiac function detection technology exists. It is called **MagnetoCardioGraphy (MCG)**, and as a non-invasive system designed precisely for analyzing the heart's electrical activity, its widespread utilization could save countless lives and billions of dollars.

Developed over recent years, MCG technology utilizes an integrated non-invasive combination of sensors, electronics and software-- all operating without the use of x-ray radiation. The technology is enabled through the visual analysis of magnetic fields generated by the heart's electrical activity -- including ventricular repolarization -- toward determining beat-to-beat analysis, underlying coronary artery disease and relative risk of cardiac death.

Heart-related incidents are the number one cause of death in the United States. Every day 2,400 Americans die of cardio vascular disease (CVD), totaling 876,000 deaths per year. Specifically, there are now 456,000 deaths from heart attacks or myocardial infarctions annually. These statistics represent almost twice the number of deaths due to cancer.

Of the almost 300 million people in the U.S. alone, it is estimated that 80 million have one or more forms of cardiovascular disease (CVD). These include: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, coronary heart disease, stroke, heart failure and congenital cardiovascular defects. One in four adults below age 65 and almost every person over age 65 suffers from CVD.

MCG technology holds tremendous promise toward early screening of patients who do not have symptoms of heart disease but who have significant risk factors (such as Tim Russert). It may also be utilized in patients with symptoms of heart disease, such as chest pain, to rule out a heart attack. A recent study conducted at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles entitled “Accurate Diagnosis of Coronary Artery Disease Without Exposure to Radiation Using Non-Stress MagnetoCardioGraphy” confirms the usefulness of MCG tests.

The technology performs a non-invasive test that analyzes the magnetic fields generated by each beat of the heart’s electrical activity. The scan takes approximately ten minutes to complete and can determine whether a person has coronary heart disease. Currently, standard tests used to diagnose coronary artery disease such as CT, angiography scan or cardiac catheterization can deliver significant amounts of radiation to patients. In fact, with nuclear stress studies, the radiation exposure level can be up to three times the amount of radiation that the surviving inhabitants of Nagasaki were exposed to during World War II. On this count and others, MCG represents an important breakthrough technology worthy of urgent support and application.

Tim Russert’s death should provide a wake-up call to every individual owner of a heart. You. Me. Our family members. Our doctors. Every celebrity, every media professional and every health care consumer. Every living person who wants to stay healthy. We need to change our thinking about heart care strategy. We need to be more proactive. In an age when medical care, in general, is exponentially improving its diagnostic sophistication and preventive care, how can we effectively raise the bar for cardiac care? How can we significantly reduce the statistic of which Tim Russert became a part, and with which his name and memory will forever be associated?

It's time to be more aggressive and individually involved with preventive detection. Critical support is needed to break through the slow-moving bureaucracy involved in bringing new cardiac-related technologies to physicians, the marketplace and expensive trials. MCG has FDA approval but would benefit from expanded trial evidence and industry support. It's time to challenge the existing blocks to technology development and move forward with the next level of early diagnostic and lifetime monitoring technology. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends cardiovascular risk assessment begin at age 20.

Russert was under a cardiologist's care. He followed a fitness program and medication regimen. He was aware of his condition. He was an intelligent information gatherer and astute patient. All of this was not enough. His death still happened. Prematurely. Fifty-eight years of age is considered a young death as savvier Americans grow old healthier and enjoy increasing longevity. Yet we continue to see that a specific cause of death--in this case cardiovascular disease, and attaining the finest treatment and care possible toward optimum longevity--is so often overlooked until a well-known personality dies.

We should honor Tim Russert and millions of others who have gone before him prematurely, by pressing for serious inroads in this area of medical care. Let us not persist in our predisposition of being slow-to-embrace breakthrough cardiac technologies. We need to act more swiftly on technologies that can save lives. Let us encourage the medical community and American health and medical care consumers to call for universal support of important new heart care technologies that are capable of early detection of Heart Disease, especially MagnetoCardioGraphy.

Sincerely,

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