IV Administration of Medication
What You Need to Know

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For many radiologic technologists, the intravascular administration of contrast media or other medications is a part of clinical practice. For example, according to the ASRT CT Practice Standards, CT technologists’ scope of practice includes:
- Performing venipuncture as prescribed by a licensed independent practitioner.
- Starting and maintaining IV access as prescribed by a licensed independent practitioner.
- Identifying, preparing and/or administering medications as prescribed by a licensed independent practitioner.

The American College of Radiology also supports the administration of contrast and other medications by technologists. The ACR and the Society for Pediatric Radiology jointly publish practice guidelines for the appropriate use and administration of intravascular contrast. The guidelines describe the qualifications and responsibilities of certified and licensed imaging personnel, who must first comply with their facility’s policies and procedures. According to the guidelines, technologists should be able to confirm the efficacy of an injection for a given procedure, screen for potential contraindications and recognize adverse reactions to contrast media.

Occasionally, questions might arise regarding the need for a physician or independent practitioner to be present during an intravascular injection. It’s helpful to understand the various levels of physician supervision, as defined by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.
- Under general supervision, a physician can provide oversight of a procedure from a distance, but he or she is not required to be present in the room where the procedure is taking place.
- Personal supervision requires that the physician be present in the room while the procedure is performed.
- Direct supervision requires the physician to be nearby. He or she is not required to be present in the room but must be available at all times in case his or her assistance is needed.

According to the ACR, technologists who administer contrast or other medication must only do so under the direct supervision of a physician. The ASRT House of Delegates supports this position. First adopted as a position statement in 2006, and later included in an Advisory Opinion Statement (“Medication Injections by Radiologic Technologists”), the House states that:

“The intravenous injection of contrast media and other medications by radiologic technologists be performed only when a licensed independent practitioner is immediately available to ensure proper diagnosing of and treatment of adverse events.”

It is important to note that each state or health care facility may have its own regulations regarding who can and cannot perform venipuncture and contrast administration. It’s essential that technologists review the specific guidelines for medication administration in their state and at their facility. Once eligibility in a given state and facility has been determined, the technologist must proceed only under the direct supervision of a physician or other qualified independent practitioner. This means that the physician or independent practitioner must be nearby — within the same office or location — and immediately available at all times.

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SIDE NOTE
Access the ACR-SPR Practice Guideline for the Use of Intravascular Contrast Media at www.acr.org.