

# Correlation Between Anterior- Posterior and Lateral Dimensions and the Effective and Water-Equivalent Diameters in Axial Images from Head Computed Tomography Examinations

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## CORRELATION BETWEEN ANTERIOR–POSTERIOR AND LATERAL DIMENSIONS WITH THE EFFECTIVE AND WATER-EQUIVALENT DIAMETERS IN AXIAL IMAGES FROM HEAD COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY EXAMINATIONS

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The study aims to correlate the effective diameter ( $D_{\text{eff}}$ ) and water-equivalent diameter ( $D_w$ ) parameters with anterior–posterior (AP), lateral (LAT) and AP + LAT dimensions in order to estimate the patient dose in head CT examinations. Seventy-four patient datasets from head CT examinations were retrospectively collected. The patient's sizes were calculated from the middle slice using a software of IndoseCT.  $D_w$  and  $D_{\text{eff}}$  were plotted as functions of AP, LAT and AP + LAT dimensions. The best trendline fit for LAT and AP functions was a second order polynomial, which resulted in  $R^2$  of 0.89 for  $D_{\text{eff}}$  vs LAT, 0.88 for  $D_w$  vs LAT, 0.92 for  $D_{\text{eff}}$  vs AP and 0.91 for  $D_w$  vs AP. A linear correlation was found for  $D_{\text{eff}}$  vs AP + LAT,  $D_w$  vs AP + LAT and  $D_w$  vs  $D_{\text{eff}}$  with  $R^2$  of 0.97, 0.96 and 0.98, respectively.

### INTRODUCTION

Technological improvements in computed tomography (CT) scanners has been increasing rapidly in recent years, especially in terms of the number of detector array, slice number, speed of imaging and image quality<sup>(1)</sup>. These advances have led to an increased usage of CT scanners<sup>(2,3)</sup>. Despite being a reliable choice of diagnostic imaging, CT scanners deliver a radiation dose to patients<sup>(4,5)</sup> and may impose the risk of cancer induction<sup>(6,7)</sup>. Huang *et al.*<sup>(8)</sup> found that pediatric head CT examinations were correlated with an increased occurrence of benign brain tumor. Hence, it is important to obtain an accurate dose estimation received by the patients in order to investigate radiation risk caused by CT scanner.

Volume computed tomography dose index ( $\text{CTDI}_{\text{vol}}$ ) and dose-length product (DLP) displayed on CT scanner consoles are the most extensive metrics as dose indicators. Both metrics are used in the determination of diagnostic reference levels (DRLs)<sup>(9)</sup>. However,  $\text{CTDI}_{\text{vol}}$  and DLP do not reflect the actual dose received by patients. The patient dose primarily depends on patient size, tissue attenuation and scanner radiation output.  $\text{CTDI}_{\text{vol}}$  was introduced as the standard metric to measure CT output using 16 and 32 cm of cylindrical polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA) reference phantoms,

and DLP is the product of  $\text{CTDI}_{\text{vol}}$  and exposure scan length<sup>(10)</sup>. Hence, neither  $\text{CTDI}_{\text{vol}}$  nor DLP should be considered to assess actual dose received by patients.

The American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) in report 204 introduced a new metric for estimating dose received by an individual patient and called it as the size-specific dose estimate (SSDE)<sup>(11)</sup>. SSDE is a simple metric to estimate patient dose on the basis of geometrical size. The basis of geometrical size used in the report 204 is the effective diameter ( $D_{\text{eff}}$ ), i.e. diameter of a circle whose area is the same as the patient cross section. The SSDE is calculated based on a  $\text{CTDI}_{\text{vol}}$  and a size-dependent factor based on the  $D_{\text{eff}}$ . The  $D_{\text{eff}}$  was specifically designed for abdomen-pelvic region, which was assumed to be a homogeneous area. The thorax region, which mostly consists of air, will have a higher absorbed dose than the abdomen-pelvic region for the same geometrical size. Hence, a more accurate metric is needed. This problem was solved in AAPM report 220<sup>(12)</sup> by introducing the water-equivalent diameter ( $D_w$ ), which considers tissue attenuation. Wang *et al.*<sup>(13)</sup> found that the use of  $D_w$  in calculating the attenuation using CT localizer radiograph gave more accurate results than using only geometry-based (anterior–posterior [AP] and lateral [LAT]) dimensions. This high accuracy was found

especially in the thorax region, although both  $D_w$  and geometrical-based calculations gave the proper relationship in the abdomen region.

In AAPM report 204<sup>(11)</sup>,  $D_{eff}$  is calculated as the square root of the product of AP and LAT dimensions. However, measuring  $D_{eff}$  is sometime cumbersome for busy facilities. Alternatively,  $D_{eff}$  can be estimated from the dimensions of AP, LAT or AP + LAT, which are used to determine the size-dependent conversion factor in SSDE calculations. The estimation of  $D_{eff}$  through AP, LAT or AP + LAT can be established by the correlations between the two diameters. AAPM report 204 has presented graphs showing the relationships between  $D_{eff}$  and AP,  $D_{eff}$  and LAT and  $D_{eff}$  and AP + LAT for abdominal region. Other regions of the body, such as head, which is one of the frequently subjected studies to CT examinations, are not reported yet<sup>(14)</sup>. Therefore, the correlation between both AP and LAT dimensions with  $D_{eff}$  in head region is interesting to be presented.

As mentioned earlier,  $D_w$  is a more robust metric of the patient size to be used to estimate SSDE<sup>(15)</sup>, which can also be calculated from CT localizer radiograph images and axial CT images. Manual measurement of  $D_w$  is complicated and requires user intervention to define patient boundaries. However, AAPM recommends an alternative solution to use an automated segmentation to make it more effective. Anam *et al.*<sup>(16–18)</sup> have developed the IndoseCT software, an automated segmentation-based software, to automatically calculate  $D_{eff}$  and  $D_w$ . However, to facilitate simpler  $D_w$  calculations using LAT and AP, the relationships between LAT and AP to  $D_w$  is also necessary to be presented. To the best of our knowledge, the relationships have not been reported yet.

For accurate estimate of the dose at CT head examinations, the AAPM report 293 published the new size-conversion factors<sup>(19)</sup>. However, AAPM report 293 does not discuss the relationships between LAT, AP,  $D_{eff}$  and  $D_w$ . The relationships between LAT, AP and  $D_{eff}$  are only found at AAPM TG 204 for abdomen and not for the head.

In addition, average  $D_w$  from all slices is more accurate than  $D_w$  measured at the center slice. The previous study<sup>(16)</sup> reported that differences of average  $D_w$  measured at the center slice are  $0.92 \pm 3.37\%$  and  $6.75 \pm 1.92\%$  for thorax and head examinations, respectively. This suggests to obtain the average  $D_w$  along the longitudinal axis instead of only  $D_w$  measured at the center slice. Therefore, the current study aimed to correlate the  $D_{eff}$  and  $D_w$ s (i.e. average  $D_w$  from all slices and  $D_w$  measured at the middle slice) parameters with AP and LAT dimensions in order to estimate accurately patient dose in the head CT examination.

## METHODS

### Datasets

Seventy-four patient datasets were retrospectively taken in DICOM format from January to March, 2019. The datasets were from two scanners, i.e. a 16-slice GE Optima CT520 and a 64-slice Siemens Sensation. The patient ages ranged from 3 days to 79 years old. Pediatric patients were scanned by the 64-slice Siemens Sensations CT scanner with a tube voltage of 120 kVp, tube current of 170 mA, exposure time of 1000 ms and 0.85 pitch. Adult patients were scanned by the 16-slice GE Optima CT520 CT scanner with a tube voltage of 120 kVp, tube current of 298-mA tube, exposure time of 1651 ms, 0.9378 pitch and by the 64-slice Siemens Sensations CT scanner with a tube voltage of 120 kVp, tube current of 297 mA, exposure time of 1000 ms and 0.85 pitch. When head CT examination was performed, the tube current modulation (TCM) was turned off. The patients were scanned in helical mode.

### AP, LAT, $D_{eff}$ and $D_w$ calculation

AAPM report 204 reported that AP and LAT dimensions can be measured from CT localizer radiographs and axial CT images using digital calipers<sup>(11)</sup>. Here, we measured the patient sizes from axial images of head CT examinations. The AP dimension was measured from top side to bottom side of image, and the LAT dimension was measured from the left side to the right side of the body part. Both measurements were performed manually using IndoseCT version 20b as shown in Figure 1. We used the middle slice of the images to evaluate patient sizes.

The automated calculation of  $D_{eff}$  has been validated over the phantom and patient images<sup>(16)</sup>. The  $D_{eff}$  value for the head and body phantoms were 15.9 and 31.97 cm, while for patient images show a good correlation compared with manual calculation ( $R^2 = 0.996$  in thorax region). There are three options to automatically calculate the  $D_{eff}$  using IndoseCT 20b, namely area, center and max. The area option implies that the  $D_{eff}$  is calculated directly from the patient cross-sectional area, the center option indicates that the calculation of the diameter is performed using LAT and AP dimension from the center of the image and the max option means that the  $D_{eff}$  is calculated based on the LAT and AP dimensions that give the maximum value. We set the automatically calculated  $D_{eff}$  based on the area of patients (Figure 2). Anam *et al.*<sup>(20)</sup> reported that there was no significant difference between calculating the  $D_{eff}$  based on area and max options.

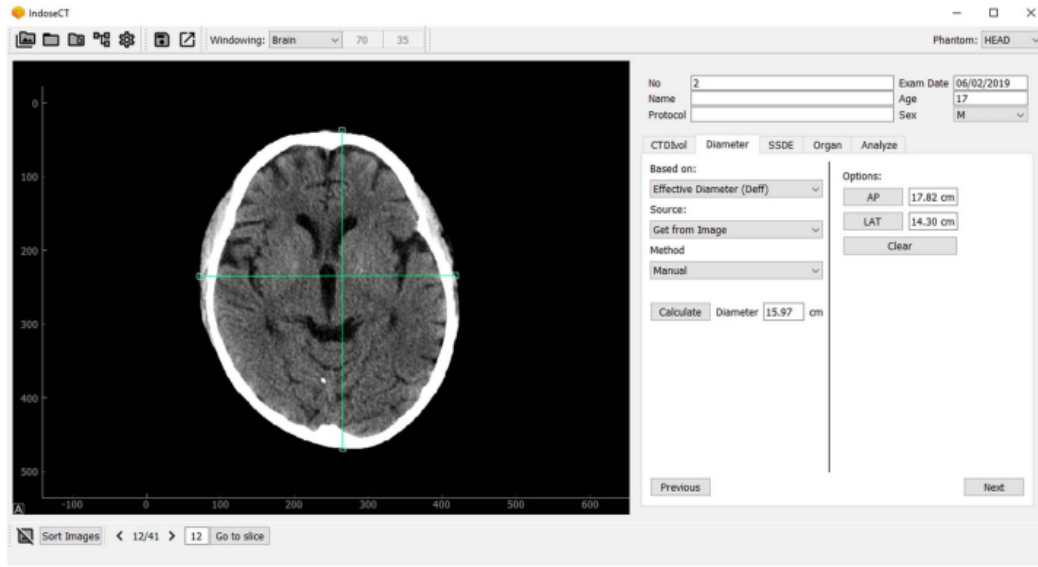


Figure 1. IndoseCT 20b screen display to measure AP dimension and LAT dimension manually.

Equation 1 shows the final calculation to obtain the  $D_w$  value<sup>(12)</sup>:

$$D_w = 2 \sqrt{\left[ \frac{1}{1000} \frac{HU(x,y)_{ROI}}{HU(x,y)_{ROI} + 1} \right] \frac{A_{ROI}}{\pi}} \quad (1)$$

$HU(x,y)_{ROI}$  is the mean CT number in the patient image, which can be determined using measurement tools on the CT workstations or CT console, which requires manual intervention from user. The automatic contour algorithm used in the IndoseCT 20b leads to a more practical alternative approach to obtaining the  $D_w$  (Figure 3). In a previous study<sup>(14)</sup>, the algorithm has been verified at the phantom and patient images and provided the  $D_w$  value for head phantom of 16.87 cm and body phantom of 33.87 cm. The percentage differences between automatic calculation and manual calculation were  $<0.5\%$ <sup>(14)</sup>.

#### AP, LAT, $D_{eff}$ and $D_w$ correlation

AAPM has established  $D_{eff}$  as functions of AP, LAT and AP + LAT dimensions to estimate the size-dependent conversion factor. It reported that  $D_{eff}$  and AP,  $D_{eff}$  and LAT dimensions were correlated through second order polynomial functions (Equation 2) and the sum of AP and LAT was correlated

as a linear function to  $D_{eff}$  (Equation 3).

$$y = ax^2 + bx + c \quad (2)$$

$$\bar{y} = a\bar{x} + b \quad (3)$$

The correlation plots in AAPM report 204 were collected from three different sources of the abdominal region. Here, we used the clinical data from head CT examinations to find out the correlation and trendline of  $D_{eff}$  and  $D_w$ .

#### RESULTS

Figure 4 shows the  $D_{eff}$  of head as a function of AP dimension ranging from 10.87 to 19.26 cm. A second order polynomial function is the best-fit trend line in representing the correlation between  $D_{eff}$  and AP dimensions. The trend line gives the coefficients  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$  and  $R^2$ , viz.  $-0.05$ ,  $2.41$ ,  $-10.38$  and  $0.92$ , respectively. Figure 5 shows the  $D_{eff}$  as a function of LAT dimension ranging from 8.66 to 17.44 cm. The best-fit trendline is a second order polynomial function with  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$  values of  $-0.04$ ,  $2.06$  and  $-5.23$ , respectively. The  $R^2$  value is  $0.89$ . The slope of the line decreases as a function of LAT dimension causing a downward curvature in the line. Figure 6 shows the  $D_{eff}$  as a function of sum of AP and LAT dimensions. There is a positive linear relationship with a slope of  $0.49$ , an intercept of  $0.43$  and  $R^2$  is  $0.97$ . The  $D_{eff}$



## CORRELATION BETWEEN ANTERIOR-POSTERIOR AND LATERAL



Figure 2. IndoseCT 20b screen display to automatically calculate  $D_{eff}$  based on patient image area.



Figure 3. IndoseCT 20b screen display to automatically calculate  $D_w$  from patient's image.

increases as a function of sum of both AP and LAT dimensions.

Figure 7 shows the  $D_w$  of head as a function of the AP dimension ranging from 10.87 to 19.26 cm. A second order polynomial function is the best-fit curve with  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$  and  $R^2$  of  $-0.06$ ,  $2.95$ ,  $-14.75$  and  $0.91$ , respectively. This is similar to the curve of  $D_w$  vs AP. Figure 8 shows the  $D_w$  as a function of the

LAT dimension. The best-fit trendline is a second order polynomial function with  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$  values of  $0.044$ ,  $2.30$  and  $-7.12$ , respectively, and a  $R^2$  value of  $0.88$ . This  $R^2$  value is almost the same as the  $R^2$  value for the  $D_{eff}$  vs LAT curve ( $0.89$ ). The slope of the line decreases as a function of LAT dimension so it causes a downward curvature of the line. Figure 9 shows the  $D_w$  as a function of the sum of AP and LAT

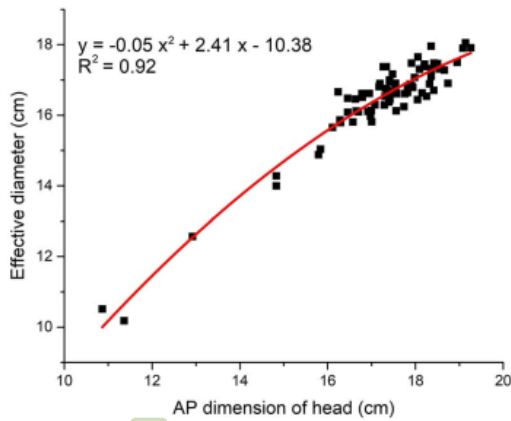


Figure 4.  $D_{\text{eff}}$  as a function of the AP dimension for head CT examination.

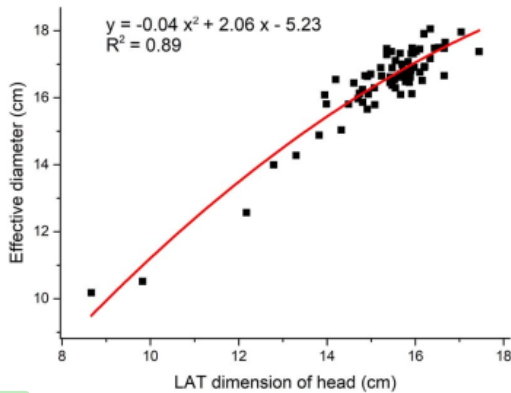


Figure 5.  $D_{\text{eff}}$  as a function of the LAT dimension for head CT examination.

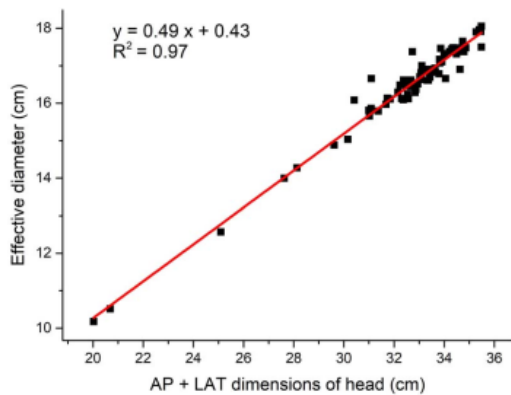


Figure 6.  $D_{\text{eff}}$  as a function of the sum of AP and LAT dimensions for head CT examination.

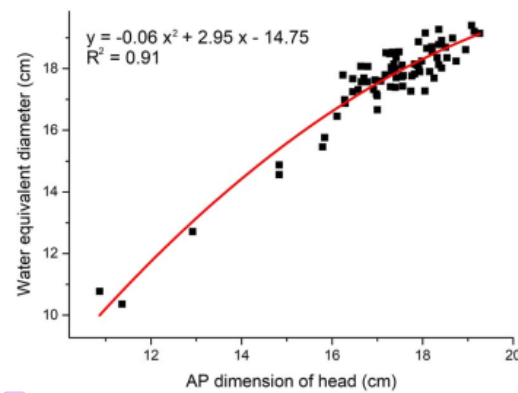


Figure 7.  $D_w$  as a function of the AP dimension for head CT examination.

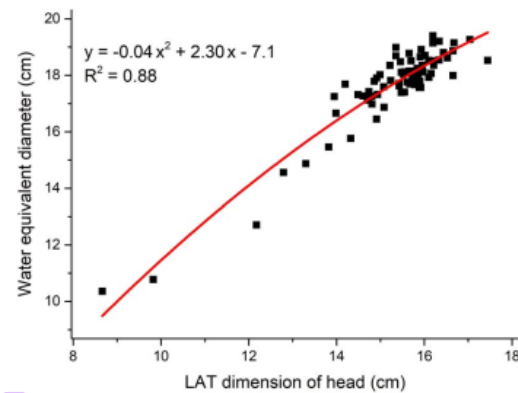


Figure 8.  $D_w$  as a function of the LAT dimension for head CT examination.

dimensions. There is a positive linear relationship with a slope of 0.58, an intercept of  $-1.23$  and  $R^2$  of 0.96.

Figure 10 shows the  $D_w$  as a function of the  $D_{\text{eff}}$ . There is a positive linear relationship with a slope of 1.17, intercept of  $-1.70$  and  $R^2$  of 0.98. The  $D_{\text{eff}}$  increases as the function of the sum of both AP and LAT dimensions. Automatic calculation gives the result value of  $D_w$  as  $17.6 \pm 1.6$  cm and  $D_{\text{eff}}$  as  $16.4 \pm 1.4$  cm.

Figure 11 shows the average  $D_w$  of head as a function of the  $D_w$  measured at the center. A second order polynomial function is the best-fit curve with  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$  and  $R^2$  of 0.83, 0.03,  $-0.16$  and 4.5, respectively. It is found that the average  $D_w$  of head is 12.8% smaller than the  $D_w$  measured at the center. Figure 12 shows the average  $D_w$  as a function of the sum of AP and LAT dimensions. There is a positive linear relationship with a slope of 0.56, an intercept of  $-2.64$  and  $R^2$  of 0.77.

# CORRELATION BETWEEN ANTERIOR-POSTERIOR AND LATERAL

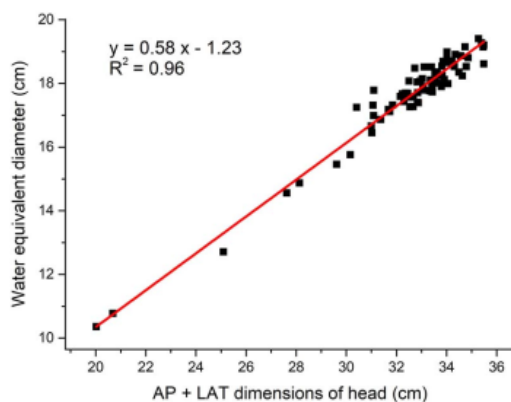


Figure 9.  $D_w$  as a function of the sum of AP and LAT dimensions for head CT examination.

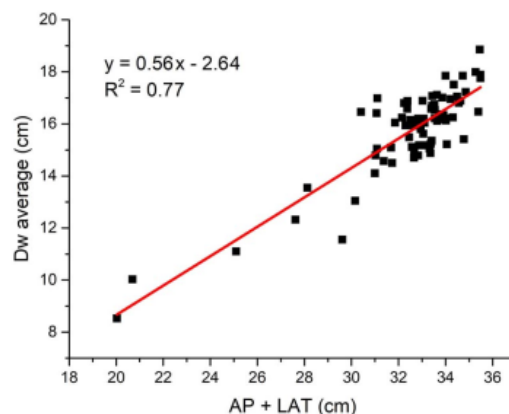


Figure 12. Average  $D_w$  as a function of the sum of AP and LAT dimensions for head CT examination.

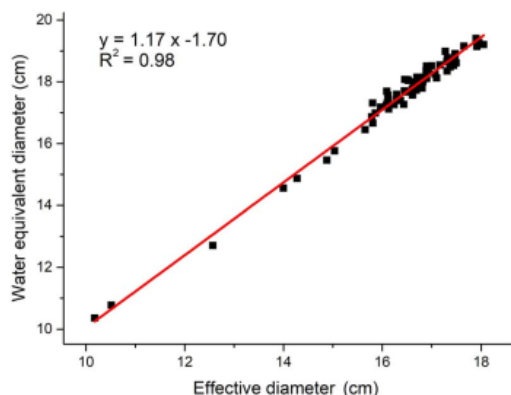


Figure 10.  $D_w$  as a function of the  $D_{eff}$  for head CT examination.

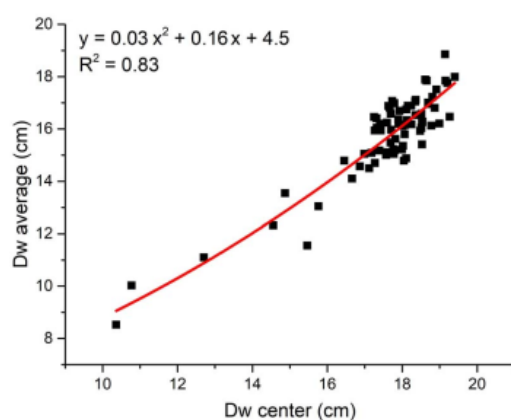


Figure 11. Average  $D_w$  as a function of the  $D_w$  measured at the center for head CT examination.

## DISCUSSION

AAPM issued Report 204 to measure pediatric and adult dose from CT examinations as the product of  $CTDI_{vol}$  and a size-dependent conversion factor. The size-dependent conversion factor was obtained from four research groups by using physical anthropomorphic phantoms, cylindrical PMMA phantoms, Monte Carlo voxelized phantoms and Monte Carlo mathematical cylinders phantoms. It is expected that using the size-dependent conversion factor will result in more accurate estimate of the patient dose.

The size-dependent conversion factor depends on the phantom diameter<sup>(12,13)</sup>. The  $D_{eff}$  value is calculated as the square root of the product of the AP and LAT dimensions. The AP and LAT dimensions can be measured from a CT localizer radiograph or axial CT image<sup>(21,22)</sup>. It is very useful in a clinical setting to estimate  $D_{eff}$  using one dimension, either AP or LAT. This can be done if relationships between  $D_{eff}$  vs AP and  $D_{eff}$  vs LAT, have been developed. Plots showing the relationship between  $D_{eff}$  vs AP and LAT dimensions were given in Report 204. They show strong correlations between  $D_{eff}$  vs AP and  $D_{eff}$  vs LAT, with  $R^2$  value of 0.99 for both. However, the correlations were based on the abdominal region only and would need to be found for other body parts.

The plots of  $D_{eff}$  as a function of AP and LAT dimensions for head images are shown in Figures 4 and 5. Both plots are second order polynomial functions with a downward curvature. The  $R^2$  value of  $D_{eff}$  vs AP is greater than  $D_{eff}$  vs LAT. However, there is a difference between the results from our study and the result given in the AAPM Report 204. In the AAPM report, the correlation between  $D_{eff}$  vs LAT has a slightly-upward curvature, while our study gives a slightly downward curvature. The AAPM report used data from three different sources i.e. mathematical pediatric phantom, water-equivalent

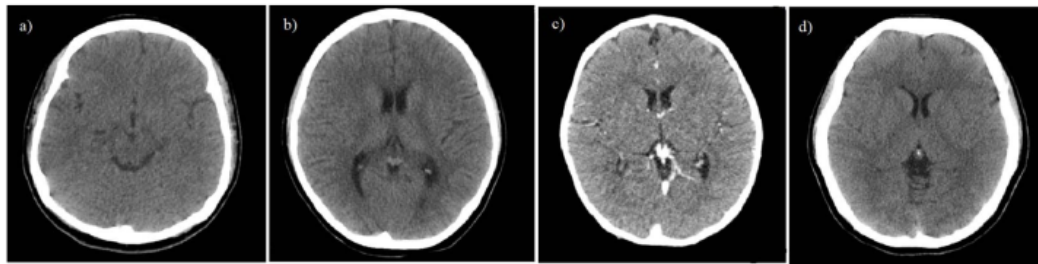


Figure 13. Examples of head images used in this study, (a) LAT = 15.92 cm and AP = 16.65 cm, (b) LAT = 16.81 cm and AP = 18.21 cm, (c) LAT = 12.79 cm and AP = 14.83 cm and (d) LAT = 15.7 cm and AP = 17.41 cm.

Table 1.  $R^2$  values and fit parameters between  $D_{\text{eff}}$  and AP,  $D_{\text{eff}}$  and LAT,  $D_{\text{eff}}$  and (AP + LAT),  $D_w$  and AP,  $D_w$  and LAT, and  $D_w$  and (AP + LAT), average  $D_w$  and center  $D_w$ , and average  $D_w$  and (AP + LAT).

Relationship	$R^2$ Value	$a$ Value	$b$ Value	$c$ Value
$D_{\text{eff}}$ vs AP	0.92	-0.05	2.41	-10.38
$D_w$ vs AP	0.91	-0.06	2.95	-14.75
$D_{\text{eff}}$ vs LAT	0.89	-0.042	2.06	-5.23
$D_w$ vs LAT	0.88	0.04	2.30	-7.12
$D_{\text{eff}}$ vs (AP + LAT)	0.97	0.49	0.43	—
$D_w$ vs (AP + LAT)	0.96	0.58	-1.23	—
$D_w$ vs $D_{\text{eff}}$	0.98	1.17	-1.70	—
Average $D_w$ vs center $D_w$	0.83	0.03	0.16	4.5
Average $D_w$ vs (AP + LAT)	0.77	0.56	-2.64	—

cylindrical phantom and pediatric patients of CT examinations<sup>(23–25)</sup> of trunk measurement, whereas we used head clinical data as our source. We believe that the difference in both trendlines is due to the different sources. The head images in our study have a circular or slightly elliptical cross section as shown in Figure 13, which means the AP and LAT values are almost the same. Mean values of AP and LAT dimensions were  $17.25 \pm 1.47$  cm and  $15.29 \pm 1.36$ , respectively. We observed the same curvature of  $D_{\text{eff}}$  vs (AP + LAT dimensions) as the AAPM report, although our  $R^2$  value (0.97) was slightly lower than theirs (1.00). We believe that these small differences are caused by the number of samples used.

We have noted that the essential physical parameter in quantifying X-ray radiation is X-ray attenuation, and one of the factors affecting the attenuation is the object's density in the X-ray pathway. However, the  $D_{\text{eff}}$  is a metric that is independent of composition. A more suitable metric that incorporates both physical size and composition of the body is the  $D_w$ . As we can see from Figure 9,  $D_{\text{eff}}$  can be used to estimate  $D_w$ . To our best knowledge, the correlations between AP dimension, LAT dimension,  $D_{\text{eff}}$  and  $D_w$  for head CT examination has never been reported. These correlations are essential as a primary point to calculate patient dose.

The relationship between the  $D_{\text{eff}}$  and  $D_w$  is shown in Figure 10. From the calculation, we found that the  $D_w$  value ( $17.6 \pm 1.6$  cm) is slightly higher than  $D_{\text{eff}}$  ( $16.43 \pm 1.36$  cm). Both calculation result is significantly different (p value < 0.05). This is because the main composition of the head is cranium bone and soft tissue.  $D_w$  considers both patient's size and composition, but  $D_{\text{eff}}$  does not. However, there is a linear correlation between both diameters ( $R^2 = 0.98$ ), so that  $D_{\text{eff}}$  can be confidently used to estimate  $D_w$ . A previous study also reported the correlation between  $D_w$  and  $D_{\text{eff}}$ <sup>(15,26)</sup>. Anam *et al.*<sup>(15)</sup> reported that  $D_w$  also linearly correlated with  $D_{\text{eff}}$  ( $R^2 = 0.73$ ). Fahmi *et al.*<sup>(26)</sup> also reported a strong correlation between  $D_w$  and  $D_{\text{eff}}$  ( $R^2 = 0.97$ ).

The relationship between average  $D_w$  from all slices is more accurate than  $D_w$  measured at the center is shown in Figure 11. From the calculation, we conclude that the average  $D_w$  value ( $15.7 \pm 1.8$  cm) is slightly smaller than  $D_w$  measured at the center ( $17.6 \pm 1.6$  cm).

Relationship between AP and LAT dimensions and the average  $D_w$  will facilitate easier and more accurate estimates patient size for patient dose estimates. Average  $D_w$ s as functions of AP + LAT dimensions are shown in Figures 12.



The best-fit parameters obtained from the current study are summarized in Table 1. In general,  $D_w$  correlations were found to be lower than  $D_{eff}$ . A recent report compared  $D_{eff}$  and  $D_w$  values as a function of LAT in the thorax region<sup>(27)</sup>. It showed the same trend, with the correlation between  $D_{eff}$  vs LAT greater than  $D_w$  vs LAT<sup>(27)</sup>.  $D_{eff}$  can be determined from  $\sqrt{AP \times LAT}$ , which does not depend to the body composition.

Our study was based on 74 local patients collected from one hospital in Indonesia. The LAT and AP dimensions were limited from 8.66 to 17.44 cm and 10.87 to 19.26 cm, respectively. It should be noticed that the sample population in our study were predominantly by adult patients and only very small number of pediatric patients. Further studies with the large variations of LAT and AP are needed to confirm the correlation between both dimensions to  $D_{eff}$  and  $D_w$ . In addition, it is necessary to collect more data from different countries, including from Europeans, Americans and Africans, and to study other body parts, which may have different geometric-size characteristics.

## CONCLUSION

The relationships between  $D_w$ ,  $D_{eff}$ , AP, LAT and AP + LAT dimensions of head from 74 local patients have been obtained. The plots of  $D_w$  and  $D_{eff}$  as a function of AP, LAT and AP + LAT dimensions have similar trendlines. In general, the values of  $D_{eff}$  as a function of AP, LAT and AP + LAT dimensions were found to have higher correlations than those of  $D_w$ . The plots of  $D_{eff}$  were also compared with AAPM 204. All plots, except  $D_{eff}$  vs LAT, had similar trends. We believe that the difference was due to the use of different sources between our study and the report published by AAPM. In this study, we also found that the mean value of  $D_w$  was higher than the mean value of  $D_{eff}$ , because  $D_w$  considers geometric size, body composition and attenuation.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Dr. Choirul Anam and Dr. Geoff Dougherty are IndoseCT developers. This software is not commercially available. It can be made available on request for research purposes. Rest of the authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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