



# Digital Motion X-Ray

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Using digital technology to capture, store and send x-ray images across the Internet is a very good thing. It allows your dentist to capture, store and retrieve x-rays of your teeth much more quickly and efficiently. It also allows a physician on a cruise ship to take an x-ray of an orthopedic injury and transmit it by satellite to the radiology department at a university hospital and receive the opinion of an expert radiologist in less than an hour.

However, like many other good things, it can also be misused in ways that are mostly designed to enrich someone at the expense of someone else. You may recall “Spinal Digital Imaging” from our August, 2004 newsletter which describes how digitized x-rays are fed to a computer program to generate a “radiology report” without ever consulting a radiologist.

Cineradiography and video-radiography are generic terms used to describe technologies that capture x-ray images while the subject is in motion. Earlier forms were film-based and were described by the term video fluoroscopy. More recently digital technology has been applied for the same purpose. The digital version is often called digital motion x-ray. Pictured to the right is one example which is sold under the DMX brand.

The medical necessity of all forms of cineradiography is the subject of much discussion and controversy. At the present time, most large health insurers label the procedures as “investigational” or “investigational/not medically necessary”. It is not that use of the technology is harmful when used with the appropriate radiation precautions, but studies to date fail to show any clear benefit of cineradiography for the purpose of diagnosing injuries.

The manufacturers of the equipment quote individual case histories in promoting their product, but the peer-reviewed medical literature doesn’t contain any carefully controlled scientific studies that demonstrate a clear advantage to its use over conventional diagnostic techniques.

The American Chiropractic College of Radiology (ACCR) no longer considers these techniques to be investigational. However, even in that community, medical necessity of these tools is defined for fairly narrow ranges of application. They specifically state that it should not be used as a “pre and post” evaluation procedure in conjunction with an adjustment or joint manipulation.

Digital motion x-ray equipment is fairly expensive and can be found on eBay under the DMX brand selling anywhere from \$28,900 to \$61,900. It is easy to see why a chiropractor who buys this equipment might be tempted to charge large fees for its use. If medical necessity for digital motion x-ray or video fluoroscopy can be established by some means, then the procedure should be coded and billed using CPT<sup>tm</sup> code 76120 as a stand-alone procedure or 76125 when used to complement a routine examination. Usual and customary amounts in Portland, Oregon for these codes are as follows:

76120 technical component	\$202.37
76120 professional component	\$148.42
76125 technical component	\$79.53
76125 professional component	\$35.89

Some chiropractors may bill under the code: 76499 - unlisted diagnostic radiographic procedure. This is not appropriate, since valid codes for the procedure do exist. ❖