We wish to draw attention to the potential dangers of using the C-arm radiolucent plate of an image intensifier as an operating table.

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The radiolucent surface plate of the C-arm image intensifier is often used as an operating table, particularly in surgery on the hand. The advantages include easier positioning and clearer quality of the image.\(^1\)

We wish to draw attention to the dangers of this practice. Examination of our image intensifier has shown three penetrating holes and a number of scratch marks on the surface plate which have been caused by wires or drills during surgery (Figs 1 and 2). In one place the plate has been perforated by a 2.5 mm drill.

The aluminium surface plate covers an underlying vacuum tube which is used to generate a potential difference of 25 to 5 kV.\(^2\) Penetration of the tube will result in an explosion and potential electrocution of the operator and the patient (Fig. 3).

Use of the plate as an operating table is unsafe and should be abandoned.

We wish to thank Ms S. Kussmaul for drawing the illustrations.

No benefits in any form have been received or will be received from a commercial party related directly or indirectly to the subject of this article.

References

Diagrams showing a) the position of the hand on the faceplate of the image intensifier, b) drilling through the bone with the vacuum tube shown underneath, c) penetration of the vacuum tube causing implosion and then d) explosion.