



Canadian Association of Radiologists Statement on Access to COVID-19 Vaccination for Medical Imaging Professionals

December 16, 2020

The Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR) applauds and welcomes Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization statement (NACI's guidance) on the COVID-19 vaccine, that "All health care workers (HCWs) should be prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, since HCWs providing frontline care to patients are differentially exposed to SARS-CoV-2, and are needed to protect healthcare capacity." The statement further recommends that "Among workers in a healthcare setting, those whose work puts them at increased risk due to direct contact with patients (e.g., physical contact with patients, sustained time in patients' room), particularly those who are in direct contact with COVID-19 patients, should be prioritized during the initial vaccine availability."

As such, the CAR strongly recommends that medical radiation technologists (MRTs), interventional radiologists, sonographers and radiologists who perform sonography, and radiologists working in emergency and trauma settings be considered early in HCW prioritization to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

These medical imaging professionals have direct, physical contact with patients under their care daily: MRTs prepare, position and monitor patients throughout their examinations; interventional radiologists perform minimally invasive surgical procedures at the bedside, sonographers and radiologists are in close contact with patients while performing sonography, and radiologists in emergency/trauma settings provide frontline care in ERs across Canada, with the attendant risks of transmission and exposure. In some cases, the patients may have confirmed or suspected COVID-19, but medical imaging is essential to their care and the risk to HCWs is offset by the essential nature of the test or treatment in question.

Our existing infection control measures have ensured that patients undergoing medical imaging examinations and interventional procedures are subject to COVID-19 symptom screening, preoperative testing, and that HCWs have an appropriate supply and level of personal protective equipment to prevent healthcare-associated infections and outbreaks. Vaccination is the logical next step to fully support HCW safety and prevent the further spread of disease. Without access to vaccination, the personal health of these medical imaging professionals is at risk, along with the health of their families and teams.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated postponement of non-urgent medical imaging services have had a detrimental effect on radiology capacity across Canada. It is essential for healthcare systems across Canada to maintain timely access to medical imaging, to ensure that patients receive the tests and treatments that they need. Maintaining access to imaging services requires ensuring the safety of the HCWs who provide those services. Delayed access to vaccination may further exacerbate capacity issues, especially in urgent and acute settings.

For these reasons, the CAR recommends and requests that MRTs, interventional radiologists, sonographers and radiologists who perform sonography, and radiologists working in emergency and trauma settings be prioritized during the initial vaccine availability.

The Canadian Association of Radiologists is the national specialty society for radiologists in Canada. We are committed to promoting the highest standards of patient care, lifelong learning, and research, while helping radiologists contribute to the very best health care for patients.