



PRESS RELEASE

Medical imaging backlog won't recover from pandemic without immediate action

January 12, 2022 - OTTAWA, ON - Canadians requiring medical imaging for various conditions are again being told they must wait as hospitals fill with COVID-19 patients. For the second time in two years, non-urgent and elective surgeries and procedures are being cancelled across the country. The further cancellation and postponement of medical imaging on top of an already exasperating backlog will most certainly mean some tests will come too late, and some patients will never recover from otherwise treatable conditions.

Before the pandemic, Canadians were already waiting an average of 50 to 82 days for CT scans and 89 days for MRI imaging. This is 20 to 52 days longer than the recommended [30-day wait time](#). Due to COVID-19 disruptions, waitlists continue to increase putting patients with non emergent conditions at risk.

The Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR) is sounding the alarm: Canada's healthcare system will be severely impacted without intervention immediately.

"The backlog and excessive wait times for medical imaging existed before the pandemic, but the strain from COVID-19 has us at a breaking point, and the result is that many patients may go undiagnosed and untreated," said Dr. Gilles Soulez, CAR President, Interventional Radiologist at the Centre Hospitalier Université de Montreal (CHUM) and Professor of Radiology at the University of Montreal. "Our healthcare system is not equipped to handle these volumes. Without additional investment in equipment and human resources and modernization of how we prioritize and refer imaging, we are looking into a very bleak future."

A recent CAR member survey indicated that 75% of radiologists across the country had not reduced the backlog for medical imaging. Further, 30% of radiologists believe that wait times for medical imaging will never return to pre-pandemic levels. This is especially concerning for individuals needing breast and colorectal cancer screening, patients undergoing cancer treatment, or those who may need imaging but have delayed seeking care due to fears or factors associated with the pandemic. An analysis recently published in the [CAR Journal](#) underlines the gaps in availability of CT and MRI scanners in Canada, and makes clear that investment is needed to address HHR and equipment shortfalls.

With nearly 80% of the Canadian population vaccinated, radiology departments across the country are seeing a massive influx of patients attempting to reschedule their appointments, further threatening an already saturated system.

"Canadians who postponed diagnostic and necessary follow-up imaging early in the pandemic are now in more urgent need of care. The influx and additional requirements for those undiagnosed or with worsening conditions are compounding an already dangerous situation," said Dr. Ania Kielar, CAR Vice President and radiologist at the JDMI (Joint Division of Medical Imaging) in Toronto. "Simply put: if we do not take action

now to resolve critical resource shortages, the demand for imaging will significantly impact our healthcare system."

The Liberal government recognized the urgency of the situation by committing to immediately invest \$6B to address wait times during the 2020 Federal Election. To ensure that Canadians achieve the healthcare outcomes they deserve the Liberal campaign commitment must be implemented in Federal Budget 2022.

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About

The Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR) is the national specialty society for radiologists in Canada. Committed to promoting the highest standards of patient care, lifelong learning, research, and helping radiologists contribute to patients' very best health care, CAR is the national voice for medical imaging excellence in patient care.

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