

Canadian Association of Radiologists Statement on Changes to the Delivery of Healthcare Services in Canada

March 14, 2023

The delivery of healthcare services in private, for-profit settings is an area of ongoing debate in Canadian healthcare policy. The Canadian Association of Radiologists' (CAR) position is that there is value in offering medical imaging services in a variety of clinical settings. Within radiology, there are models in many provinces that provide medical imaging outside of hospitals, including x-ray, MRI, CT and ultrasound. By offering patients the opportunity to have their examinations conducted in various settings, we can improve access to care, minimize the burden of disease, and decrease the administrative demands on hospitals while maintaining a commitment to high-quality care.

Upholding national standards for quality is imperative, regardless of where patients receive imaging care. To this end, the CAR produces national clinical practice and referral guidelines to ensure that Canadians are receiving evidence-based imaging care and can benefit fully from the skills and expertise of radiologists. Through our work on accreditation of imaging modalities, the CAR promotes quality assurance and improvement in the delivery of imaging services, while creating an infrastructure to facilitate the collection and aggregation of data to inform health system improvements.

Concerns about how changes to the delivery of healthcare services will affect staffing resources are valid and point to existing strain on the entire system. The existing shortage of medical radiation technologists and sonographers across the country is at near-crisis levels. We need to ensure there are sufficient health human resources. Changes in the delivery model for some surgical services will affect the demand for diagnostic imaging, with a corresponding increase in pressure on the capacity of radiology departments, clinics, and human resources. We must develop mechanisms and metrics to ensure that patients receive the quality care that they deserve, regardless of the imaging setting.

Improved access to high-quality medical imaging care is our foremost priority. The CAR continues to advocate for strengthening our radiology services and delivery mechanisms to ensure all patients have timely access to high-quality imaging care. We can improve access to imaging services by:

1. Investing in medical imaging equipment to be distributed to the provinces on a per capita basis through the Canada Health Transfer.
2. Asking the Federal Government to work with radiology stakeholders, to implement a health human resources strategy, including hiring more medical radiation technologists and sonographers to help tackle the lengthy wait times and support the influx of patients entering the system.

3. Implementing a national e-referrals program (clinical decision support) to equip referring health professionals with better access to medical imaging guidelines, ensuring that patients receive the right imaging test at the right time.
4. Harnessing homegrown artificial intelligence applications for the strategic prioritization of health human resources, technology, and infrastructure for medical imaging in Canada.

More information regarding these recommendations can be found in the [CAR's 2023 Pre-budget Submission](#) and our report on [Improving Access to Lifesaving Imaging Care for Canadians](#).

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