

Volume 9 - Issue 2, 2009 - Editorial

By Editor-in-Chief Prof. Iain McCall

Dear readers,

Healthcare is generally thought to be relatively storm-proof as far as its susceptibility to financial crises – people, after all, still get sick at the same rates. Separating the economy from healthcare, on the other hand, seems a foolhardy approach. The depth of the present crisis means that department heads need more than ever to consider belt-tightening measures and to keep an eye on the changing financial landscape.

Rising unemployment and shrinking healthcare insurance coverage are the first worrying consequences for any financial downturn, followed by the onset of a drop in financial resources the year after a recession begins, when social contributions drop in parallel to business failures and layoffs. We haven't yet begun to see the potential impact of delayed primary and preventive care on levels of demand for medical imaging services.

Therefore, despite the integral part medical imaging plays in healthcare, in this issue's cover story, we examine the likely impact of the global recession on medical imaging and provide tools to assist those thinking about taking preventive measures in their department. The first contribution from regular columnist Prof. Mathias Goyen, a well-known expert in the field of healthcare economics, acts as a general survey on the impact of the recession so far in the healthcare arena and then goes on to examine the individual modalities that have been affected, and provides advice for those who are concerned that their department is covered in the face of a potential drop in demand for services, shrinking budgets or stalled purchasing.

This is complemented by an in-depth examination of the sorts of belt-tightening measures department heads can use to streamline the management and administration of their department, written by Prof. Philip Gishen and Dr. Nicola Strickland, both noted representatives of the radiology management world. It explains how a new departmental organisation and a new focus on customer (i.e. patient) satisfaction can create the most profitable and effective results.

Finally, President of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine (EANM) Prof. Wolfram Knapp has contributed an article that examines the impact of spending cuts on healthcare, rounding up with a summary of the EANM's strategy for ensuring that nuclear medicine is not affected by any existing or coming upheaval in the financial world. It is impossible to predict every consequence as a result of the ongoing financial recession, and how that will filter down to medicine. However, by assessing the impact to date, and sharing guidance, hopefully the long-held view of radiology as recession-proof will still hold true.

As usual, we welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please send your comments to editorial@imagingmanagement.org

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