



Calls for Clarity on the Future of PACS Contracts in England



Radiologists and PACS managers have called for greater clarity about the future of local service provider PACS contracts, which come to an end in January 2013, in most of England. Speaking at eHealth Insider Live, Dr Nick Hollings, the outgoing treasurer of the UK PACS and Teleradiology Group, explained that there is a need for the government to take the lead as the decision has to be made whether to continue in regional consortia or whether to go it alone. Although it may be a brave step forward, he warned that 'go it alone' carried a risk that suppliers would be overwhelmed.

A network of regional representatives from the college had recently met the NHS IT agency, NHS Connecting for Health, but had not received clear answers about the government's future intentions. Nicola Strickland, registrar of the Royal College of Radiologists, agreed that there was a real need for guidance from government but pointed out that contracts come to an end in London in 2015. Strickland added that there was also a need for clear national guidance on managing supply and demand for radiology reporting and called for a regional network of specialist radiologists to supply reports. "There is a supply mismatch," she said. "We are all becoming more and more specialist and we cannot continue to supply the whole gamut of reports in every hospital. If we are to sustain the stroke and trauma units we will have to move on this one." She said that regional networks of radiologists who know and trust each other was preferable to out sourcing to the private sector, which could involve reports being written by overseas radiologists of unknown quality.

A DH spokesperson explained that procurement of PACS and RIS services are being considered as part of routine contract management. Options for this are being considered with stakeholders, including the NHS and the supplier community.

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