The radiology department of the University Hospital of Ben Aknoun hospital was founded 2007 and comprises three units: conventional radiology, ultrasonography, and CT. Two units are in the process of creation: MRI and vascular radiology. The activity of the imaging department is strongly linked to the direction of the hospital, which specialises in the musculoskeletal system. The hospital includes seven departments: rheumatology, neurology, orthopaedic surgery, functional rehabilitation, neurophysiology, laboratory and medical imaging. The imaging department's current activity centres around standard and specialised x-ray scans, including ultrasound, CT scans and echography.

The equipment onsite includes a room with remote controlled fluoroscopy, a bone and lung room and two Doppler echography machines, one of which is equipped with an 18 MHz linear probe for the practice of musculoskeletal examinations. The equipment we are now awaiting to complete the unit includes a room with remote solar panel, a table with bone-lung plate collector, two latest generation Doppler echography machines, a dental imaging machine, and completion of the digitisation of radiology with a PACS and RIS.

Future Development of the Imaging Department

We are planning to develop our technology during the last quarter of 2012 in terms of MRI, angiography and mammography. The department is currently being restructured and activity is limited to approximately 6,200 patients per year and 6,550 examinations. Private radiology departments and imaging centres are concentrated in big cities, and private clinics are well equipped with the latest imaging technology, so we strive to provide a similar high level. Some regions within the country and especially the southern areas aren't very well equipped but a special effort is made by the authorities to equip these areas, which suffer from a lack of human resources as well as geographic remoteness. At present, cephalometric analysis and remote imaging are both in their infancy and are coming up against internet access problems such as low bandwidth and connectivity issues.

Training of Radiologists

Residents are recruited by competitive examination after obtaining a doctorate in medicine. Their training lasts four years, with annual reviews and a specialised studies diploma. Some receive training abroad during their studies. Once the specialty diploma is obtained, the majority are allocated within health facilities across the country (Algerian specialists are bound by civil service lasting from one to four years depending on the place of employment: one year in a landlocked city and four years in a big city). Some go to find work abroad, mostly in France or Belgium, for additional training or sub-specialisation, while others leave the civil service, working in private clinics “in the hope of better days to come”. Algerian residents undergo clinical practice during their studies and are on call before
becoming qualified. We currently have about 65 percent of radiologists in the public sector and 35 percent in private. The trend is towards developing the private sector. The two are complementary despite the boundaries of state structures.

High Technology Booming in Algeria

High-tech imaging is booming in Algeria, with about 340 scanners located throughout the Algerian territory, 34 MRI machines, dozens of imaging facilities, 202 mammography units and so on, so we are driving growth in high technology to remain competitive and ensure a high standard of care for our demanding patients. Our society has identified 1,012 radiologists and 270 residents in Algeria. The Algerian Society of Radiology and Medical Imaging (MARS) was founded in 1996 and its main goal is training. Its most important activities are organising international scientific events (congresses, training courses, workshops, etc.). Up to six events are organised each year.

During my career, there are certain achievements in the development of medical imaging in Algeria, of which I am most proud; the creation of JARIM (the Algerian Journal of Radiology and Medical Imaging), the links we developed with the French Society of Radiology (SFR) and soon with the Belgian Society of Radiology; the consolidation and development of relations and exchanges within the Maghreb radiology federation comprising Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia and, of course, the training of young radiologists.

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