

Radiologists: Take Advantage of COVID-19 Downtime



Screening imaging examinations, similar to many other elective medical procedures, are generally being put off as part of measures to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). This has resulted in significantly reduced volume of cases for many radiology departments.

You might also like: [The View from Italy and More: ESR Free COVID-19 Training](#)

What to do during this downtime? It would do well for radiologists to consider this "idle" time as a gift. They can take advantage of this period of time to re-focus on their own health and wellbeing, as well as engaging in activities – eg, completing research papers or learning more about AI – to enrich themselves professionally.

Self-care; Personal Development

Prior to the pandemic, heavy workloads could have exacted a toll on radiologists' health. Remember that part of the oath you made when you finished medical school: *"I will attend to my own health, wellbeing, and abilities in order to provide care of the highest standard."* If you are worn out and lack the energy, then you won't be able to help others.

During these challenging times, positive daily routines will be very helpful. For example, setting and tracking one's goals can provide a sense of progress and success. Don't forget to maintain a healthy diet, regular exercise, and enough hours of sleep. And why not take the time to read books you've accumulated, develop new hobbies (like painting), or clean and organise those often neglected areas of the house. These doable's help build a sense of accomplishment and agency.

Connection, Supporting Others

Make use of your "radiologically idle" time to deepen connection with your partner and family. It is helpful to track one's "check-ins" with family members who are living far away from you. When you call or connect with them through videoconferencing, try to be calm and bring in some positive or encouraging news (progress on COVID-19 therapies). By providing a listening ear, a bit of hope, and a connection to meaning and purpose, family bonds are deepened.

There are things you can contribute to your local communities, such as taking part in blood donation drives ([the Red Cross](#) take appointments to align with social distancing). If you have extra money, then you can donate funds to local food banks that support the swelling numbers of unemployed. Hosting zoom coffee chats with colleagues and friends – as a means to share jokes, fears and coping strategies – helps promote a sense of belonging.

Professional Work and Advancement

Unable to contribute in normal ways as radiologists during this public health crisis, and gifted with this idle time, one can start [learning more](#)

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[about artificial intelligence or a new development in your speciality](#). This can be part of your mandatory continuing medical education (CME) credits. Likewise, there are journals that offer CME for engaging with articles, as well as other online resources to add to your radiology CME credits.

In particular, this can be a very productive time to complete research papers and start writing the next grant. While it may be difficult to focus on research work, amidst all that's going on in the world, one gets satisfaction from having meaningful undertakings while sheltered at home. The future is uncertain but it is not unreasonable to expect a surge in radiology work post COVID-19. Doing whatever is necessary to be prepared is prudent and helpful from a psychological standpoint as well.

Source: [Elsevier](#)

Image credit: iStock

Reference: Fessell D, Garver K, Lexa F (2020) Navigating "Down Time" During COVID-19. Academic Radiology. Article in press; available online 15 April. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acra.2020.04.006>

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