

## Volume 8 - Issue 5, 2008 - Country Focus: Radiology in the United States

### The American Society of Radiologic Technologists:

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Serving the Radiologic Science Profession in the United States

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**As the world's largest and oldest membership association for medical imaging technologists and radiation therapists, the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) has had a profound impact on the radiologic science profession. Its contributions include evidence based research, governmental advocacy support and educational opportunities for practicing radiologic technologists in the United States. Its efforts have resulted in the ASRT becoming known as the premier association advocating for the advancement of radiologic technologists and providing the support RTs need to excel in their chosen profession.**

Established in 1920, the ASRT has experienced tremendous growth since its inception. In 1932, the association had 400 members and was known as the American Society of x-ray Technicians. As the profession grew and new specialties emerged, membership numbers steadily rose. In 2008, the ASRT reached the 129,000-member mark and serves technologists who practice in all medical imaging specialties, including computed tomography, mammography, magnetic resonance imaging and nuclear medicine.

#### Mission

The ASRT is governed by a seven-person Board of Directors. The ASRT's mission is to foster professional growth of radiologic technologists by expanding knowledge through education, research and analysis; to promote exceptional leadership and service; and develop the radiologic technology community through shared ethics and values. The ASRT achieves its mission through a series of dynamic tactics designed to support RTs' educational goals, enhance patient care and bolster the profession's standing within the healthcare community.

Providing career resources and educational opportunities for RTs are key components of the ASRT's services. The ASRT provides its members with a myriad of unique career resources, including regular salary surveys to gauge income levels and trends, a state-of-the-art Customer Information Department to respond to member questions and the ASRT JobBank®, which allows RTs to conduct nationwide job searches.

#### Education a Priority

Even more impressive are the educational opportunities offered by the association. The ASRT's educational materials cover every practice area, from pediatric imaging and cancer pain management to proper mammography techniques and basics of radiation protection.

In the United States, RTs are certified by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, which requires them to earn 24 continuing education credits every two years. The ASRT is only one of a handful of organisations approved by the ARRT to perform all four CE responsibilities: developing, sponsoring and evaluating CE activities and recording technologists' accumulated CE credits.

The ASRT provides its members with educational opportunities through its educational materials and scientific journals. The ASRT's in-house continuing education department oversees the review and approval process for educational courses submitted by external CE sponsors to ensure that they meet ARRT standards. Moreover, the ASRT's official scholarly journals, Radiologic Technology and Radiation Therapist, include "directed reading" articles that provide CE credits for RTs. The ASRT also offers CE opportunities through virtual media outlets such as podcasts

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and web casts.

Peer-reviewed articles serve as an additional educational opportunity for ASRT members. The ASRT journals feature original research articles covering all disciplines and specialties within the medical imaging profession. These articles are evaluated by editorial review boards composed of RTs who are experienced researchers and writers.

### Supporting Enhanced Patient Care

In addition, the ASRT supports enhanced patient care through other avenues, including educating RTs, lawmakers and the public about safe medical imaging practices and the importance of educational standards for practicing technologists. The ASRT achieves this through educational campaigns and political advocacy efforts at the state and national levels.

In 2008, the ASRT joined four other radiology organisations to found the Alliance for Radiation Safety in Paediatric Imaging. Through its “Image Gently” campaign, the Alliance is raising awareness in the medical imaging field about the opportunities to lower radiation dose in the imaging of children.

The Alliance has grown to more than 20 radiology and paediatric organisations, including international organisations. The campaign has been very successful and has already garnered pledge support from more than 1,500 medical imaging professionals.

More information can be found at [www.imagegently.org](http://www.imagegently.org).

### The CARE Bill: Promoting Standards

At the legislative level, the ASRT supports enhanced patient care through the establishment of minimum education and credentialing standards for personnel who perform medical imaging and radiation therapy procedures. The ASRT has partnered with other radiologic science organisations to propose minimum federal standards to ensure that patients receive the best care possible. Known as the “Consistency, Accuracy, Responsibility and Excellence in Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy” bill, the CARE bill will ensure that all healthcare workers in the US who perform radiologic procedures meet basic educational and certification standards.

To promote the CARE bill and raise awareness about the profession at a national level, the ASRT sponsors National Radiologic Technology Week® each year and holds the annual “RT in D.C.” lobbying event in Washington, D.C. Technologists from around the country converge on Capitol Hill to meet with elected officials to advocate for the CARE bill and promote the importance of the profession.

NRTW is a week-long celebration that honours the efforts and accomplishments of RTs. Healthcare facilities throughout the country recognise RTs and promote the profession internally and externally through a series of events including open houses, parties and educational seminars.

### Introducing the Radiologist Assistant

Additionally, the ASRT partnered with the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, the American College of Radiology amongst others, to introduce the radiologist assistant in the US, which is now recognised nationally. RAs are advanced-level radiologic technologists who enhance patient care by extending the capacity of the radiologist in the diagnostic imaging environment.

Practicing RAs complete an advanced academic programme and, under the supervision of a radiologist supervisor, are qualified to perform fluoroscopy and selected radiology procedures, patient assessment, patient management and initial evaluation of diagnostic images.

### ASRT Education and Research Foundation

To ensure that the profession continues to move forward, the ASRT helps recruit students to careers in radiologic technology by providing scholarship and grant opportunities. The ASRT Education and Research Foundation awards scholarships and grants that advance the medical imaging and radiation therapy profession.

As the philanthropic arm of the ASRT, the foundation works with individual donors and corporate sponsors to award tens of thousands of dollars annually in scholarships and grants to students and practicing RTs. Since 2000, the Foundation has awarded one million dollars in scholarship and helped more than 300 entry-level students and professionals reach their educational goals.

Future goals for the association include expanding educational opportunities for RTs, becoming actively involved with national health care policy initiatives and focusing on the needs of the patients. The ASRT also plans on building online programmes and services to help medical imaging

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