

Volume 7 - Issue 3, 2007 - Editorial

The New Virtual Radiology Department: Managing a Multisite Network

Dear readers,

Teleradiology is now well-established as an integral part of the working of many radiology departments throughout the world. It has a number of advantages, including the provision of reporting services to sparsely populated areas, outof- hours teleradiology reporting services, which is used by most radiological practices in the USA, obtaining subspecialist advice and reports, consultation of cases and ease of referral to tertiary centres. However, there are also disadvantages, including the creation of radiological examinations as a commodity to be traded around the world for the cheapest reporting service, separating the radiologist from the patient and disrupting the close working relationships between radiologists and clinicians.

It is important for the patient that their care is optimal, properly coordinated and that they have control over their own care. The European Society of Radiologists (ESR) has recognised the potential problems that may develop in an unregulated worldwide teleradiology explosion and have issued guidelines for the practice of teleradiology that highlight the importance of the involvement of the local radiologist in the coordination and use of the systems. In particular, the reporting radiologists must be subject to the same regulations as the radiologists in the country of origin of the examination, for the patients' safety and to ensure the quality of the reports and that adequate means of communication are in place between the reporting radiologist and the local radiologists and clinicians.

These guidelines have been circulated widely, and it is hoped that they will be taken into account in the formulation of the proposed EU medical services directive. This edition of IMAGING Management contains articles written by experts in the field of teleradiology, who have developed local networks successfully for the benefit of their patients and to increase the efficiency of the service provided. The pitfalls of a hastily-imposed service on the provision of radiological care are also discussed, as are the solutions that have been found to work in practice.

Teleradiology is ensuring radical re-engineering of radiological services which will greatly affect both managers and radiologists. It is important for the safety and quality of care of our patients that it is introduced in an evolutionary manner with full discussion of all key participants.

ESR teleradiology guidelines are available on the ESR website <http://www.esr.org>

We welcome your thoughts and feedback on any or all of the articles within the journal. Please send your responses to myself or to Managing Editor Dervla Gleeson at editorial@imagingmanagement.org.

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