POSITION STATEMENT

Healthcare Employers responsibilities in recognising Radiographers/Radiological Technologists as Key Frontline Healthcare Workers

June 2020
The ISRRT states that healthcare employers have a responsibility to recognise radiographers and radiological technologists as ‘Key Frontline Healthcare Workers’. Furthermore, healthcare employers have an overarching responsibility in maintaining working conditions to advance for the safety, care, general health and mental wellbeing of radiographers and radiological technologists.

Radiographers and radiological technologists are responsible for undertaking a wide range of diagnostic imaging, molecular imaging, interventional, radionuclide therapy and radiation therapy procedures that are not possible without direct patient contact. These professionals play an essential role in supporting the care of patients across the pathway from referral into the service and their knowledge and skills are required throughout the patient’s entire continuum of care process.

Without imaging support to provide optimal images a diagnosis of the patient’s condition their treatment plan and medical intervention will be greatly hindered. The delivery of safe and effective radiotherapy is dependent on therapeutic radiographers and technologists working closely with patients.

Employers have an overarching responsibility for the safety, general health and mental wellbeing of all employees. Those regarded as engaged in essential clinical contact with patients may require specific attention to ensure that services to patients can be delivered efficiently and safely.
ISRRT asserts that radiographers and radiological technologists provide essential services and should be recognised as such by all employers.

Background:
The recent COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fact that employers need to recognise radiographers and radiological technologists as ‘Front line healthcare workers’ and that policies and procedures are required to protect those professionals imaging and treating potentially affected, suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients.

As front line healthcare workers, radiographers and radiological technologists are exposed to potential hazards that may put them at a high risk of infection, such as pathogen exposure, psychological distress, fatigue, occupational burnout, stigma, workplace accidents and physical and psychological violence.

Specifically, employers must provide adequate and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for radiographers and radiological technologists reflective of this frontline role.

Failure of employers to provide these essential healthcare professionals with sufficient attention to personal safety and wellbeing directly affects the delivery of patient care. In addition to PPE provision, employers should provide:

- Access to occupational health services with surveillance and blood tests to monitor any work acquired infections including when necessary immunization against specific infections and advice on self-assessment if feeling unwell i.e. symptom reporting and staying home when ill and support for those affected with occupational acquired disease or workplace accidents
- Access to water sanitation and hygiene services, including adequate clean water supplies, hand sanitizer and soap and personal hygiene products
- Ensure radiographers/radiological technologists are represented on Hospital/Institution emergency staff task force teams including COVID-19 committees
- Guidance, training, and support to reduce the risk of stress and burn out
- Guidance on Local Health and Safety legislation and work regulations
- Ongoing Education and Training in use of PPE and safe working practices
- Optimal and safe working conditions including the imaging environment incorporating aspects of room ventilation, ergonomics, and access control
Optimal manpower staffing levels including regulated work hours and adequate meal breaks in order to support safe working

- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Protocols and procedures specific to infection prevention control
- Radiation protection guidance
- Support for mental health issues
- Support for wellbeing including resilience training
- Working to agreed and safe standard operating procedures

Bibliography and useful links:

- ASRT COVID-19 Resources for Radiologic Technologists and Students
  https://www.asrt.org/covid19

- CAMRT Position Statement Personal Protective Equipment for Medical Radiation Technologists during the COVID-19 Crisis

- Covid-19 pandemic: Summary of current and emerging issues for radiographers

- COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS
  https://www.isrrt.org/full-guideline-protective-measures

- Covid-19 Society of Radiographers Covid-19 information and resources
  https://covid19.sor.org/

- ISRRRT: COVID-19 - ISRRRT Response Document - Appropriate and safe use of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy with infection control measures considered in addition to standard radiation protection procedures
  https://www.isrrt.org/full-guideline-protective-measures
• WHO: Health workers - Health worker occupational health
  https://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/hcworkers/en/

• WHO: COVID-19 Use of chest imaging in COVID-19 – A RAPID ASVICE GUIDE 11 JUNE 2020

• WHO publication: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak: rights, roles and responsibilities of health workers, including key considerations for occupational safety and health, interim guidance 19 march 2020.

Note:
Links to external websites may change without notice.