

Document Control Report

Title			
Referrers Making a referral for Diagnostic Imaging IR(ME)R Standard Operating Procedure			
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1.0	Sept 2017	Final	Approved and Signed off by Lead Clinician for Radiology
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Standard Operating Procedure Making a Referral for Diagnostic Imaging using Ionising Radiation V1.0

Categories for Trust's internal website	Tags for Trust's internal website
Diagnostic Imaging Trust's internal website	Referral, Referrer, Practitioner, Operator

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1 Introduction

The Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations {IR(ME)R} 2017 were introduced to protect patients against the hazards associated with the use of ionising radiation in medical settings.

2 Purpose

Under the regulations, employers, referrers, practitioners and operators are identified as 'Duty Holders'. Employers are responsible for ensuring that policies and procedures are put in place to direct the working practices of Referrers, Practitioners and Operators in order to minimise the risks associated with the use of ionising radiation in clinical practice.

IRMER legislation is made as criminal law not civil law and any person carrying out a function as a duty holder has a personal legal responsibility to comply with the legislation. Breaches are a criminal offence.

Whilst these guidelines are specifically written for referrers who request imaging investigations involving the use of ionising radiation, many of them apply equally to other imaging modalities such as Ultrasound and Magnetic Resonance Imaging.

Referrers

Medical and Non-medical Practitioners who act as Referrers are classed as Duty Holders and must be given adequate training* to make them aware of their responsibilities before they may refer patients for diagnostic imaging examinations involving the use of ionising radiation. Medical Referrers holding current GMC registration are deemed to have received this training prior to their registration.

*Non-medical referrers will be given training by the Radiology Dept. or may be referred to on-line modules on the Trust's e-learning platform ('STAR').

3 Scope of entitlement to act as a Referrer (see also Appendix 1)

- Medical and Dental Practitioners
- Non medical referrers including
 - Registered nurses
 - Allied Health Professionals
 - Extended Scope Physiotherapists
 - Podiatrists
 - Radiographers
 - Speech and Language Therapists

Referrals for certain types of x-ray imaging may involve 'entitlements' and referrers must familiarise themselves with the policies relating to their specific disciplines. For example, Emergency Department nurses may not request imaging using ionising radiation on children below two years of age.

Registered Practitioners trained to act as referrers should be competent to assess patients and consider the risks versus benefits of an exposure to ionising radiation.

4 Location

This Standard Operating Procedure applies to Referrers carrying out their duties in North Devon.

5 Competence

Staff undertaking the role of 'Duty Holder' must be able to demonstrate continued competence as per the organisations policy on assessing and maintaining competence. (See Appendix 2 – links to scope of entitlement /competency assessment)

6 Equipment

- Imaging Request forms (paper or electronic)
- iRefer (available in booklet format, on-line, or as I-phone app) see below.

7 Procedure

Referrals for medical exposures shall be made in accordance with documented Referral Criteria.

The criteria to be used by the Trust will be based on those provided in the "iRefer - Making the best use of clinical radiology" document, published by the Royal College of Radiologists*.

*iRefer is available via radiology pages on the Trust's website.

Radiology Request forms (or referral letters on officially headed paper) will only be accepted from recognised referrers who fulfil the requirements of duty holders as stated above.

Referrer's responsibilities under IR(ME)R

- In order to avoid an unintended radiation exposure or wrong imaging investigation on a patient, all imaging requests must correctly identify the individual for whom the examination is intended. Therefore, imaging request forms must bear at least three patient identifiers from the following list;
 - Full name,
 - Address
 - Postcode
 - Date of birth
 - Hospital or NHS number if known.
- Where the patient's identity is unknown, standard Trust identification procedures must be followed. (NDHT Patient Identification Policy)

- For follow-up /out-patient referrals, the patient's telephone number is also desirable.
- For procedures involving the use of ionising radiation, the Referrer must include sufficient clinical information to enable the Practitioner to justify the examination. Examinations involving ionising radiation should only be requested when the results, either positive or negative, will alter the management of the patient. The scope and range of requests for non-medical referrers is restricted in accordance with local arrangements (for details see Appendix 1)
- The Referrer must inform the patient about the test(s) that are being requested for them and explain the risks v benefits of examinations using ionising radiation. The radiology department will then consider the patients attendance for a non-invasive x-ray examination as their given consent to undergo the procedure. Invasive tests such as those requiring cannulation and administration of contrast media will require additional formal written consent at the time of the examination.
- Referrers must provide sufficient information to enable special circumstances to be identified in order to minimise any unnecessary, avoidable and repeat doses of ionising radiation, e.g. previous clinical radiation procedures, pregnancy status, underlying reasons for procedures in relation to screening, employment or for medico-legal purposes
- Referrers must NOT request repeat procedures without taking into account other procedures that are still in progress or outstanding and must highlight this on any additional referral.
- If the referral involves ionising radiation, the possibility of pregnancy must be checked and excluded for all female patients aged 10-55 years. The date of the last menstrual period should be recorded on the request form.
- Imaging referrals must be submitted on North Devon Radiology Request forms, appropriately formatted (A5 / A4) electronic copies (GP referrals) or by letter on officially headed paper. Referrers in East and Mid Devon must use RD&E request forms.
- The Referrer must complete the form legibly. Do not use 'text-speak'.
- The request form must be signed and dated by the Referrer. Legally a signature means that the Referrer has taken responsibility for the IRMER specific aspect of their role and they can be held accountable for their actions.
- The request form must also include the contact details of the referrer i.e. bleep and /or telephone number so that they can be contacted if necessary.

- Radiographers have a statutory and professional responsibility to refuse to undertake an x-ray examination if the request form does not bear sufficient information to enable them to justify the request, or if in their experience they believe it is unnecessary or the examination will not benefit or alter patient management.
- Any requests that do not conform to these standards will be returned to the referrer for further information / corrective action. This may result in delays and inconvenience to patients, affecting the timeliness of their treatment.

It is normally implied that Referrers are requesting a Radiological opinion and in most circumstances the images will be reported by a Radiologist, Registrar or Advanced Practitioner. However, if the referrer requests an x-ray examination solely for their own assessment or to effect immediate treatment, then under IRMER legislation they are responsible for recording their clinical opinion or evaluation of the x-ray examination in the patient's notes

8 References

Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposures) Regulations 2017. Statutory Instruments 2017 No 1322

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1322/pdfs/ukxi_20171322_en.pdf

Ionising (Medical Exposures) Regulations 2000. Statutory Instruments 2000 No 1059 –

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2000/20001059.htm>

IRMER – Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposures) Amendment Regulations 2006

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/ukxi_20062523_en.pdf

9 Associated Documentation

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust Policies for:

- Standard Operating Procedure: Patient Identification Policy
- Standard Operating Procedure: Checking Pregnancy Status prior to procedures involving ionising radiation
- Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust Radiation Policy

10 Appendix 1 - Scope of Entitlement

RADIOLOGY DEPARTMENT GROUP ENTITLEMENT

Competencies for entitlement as a duty holder under IR(ME)R at North Devon District Hospital

Referrers

Staff Group	Registration	Scope of Referral
Medical Consultant	GMC Registration	Diagnostic examinations Interventional examinations within speciality
Non-consultant hospital doctor	GMC Registration	Diagnostic examinations (not Interventional procedures or specialist CT)
General practitioners	GMC Registration	Diagnostic examinations (excluding CT)
Dental practitioners	GDC Registration	General radiography of the jaw + CXR for inhaled FB
Radiographers	HCPC Registration	Orbits X-ray, Lat Skull X-ray (FB for MRI) Spine / LVA for DXA
Ultrasonographers	HCPC Registration (pending)	Abdominal x-rays
Emergency /nurse practitioners	NMC Registration	Radiography of extremities, pelvis, chest and soft tissue neck (FB)
Physiotherapists	HCPC Registration	General radiography of extremities, hips, knees and spine
Podiatrists	HCPC Registration	Radiography of feet
Speech and language therapists	HCPC Registration	Video fluoroscopy

Practitioners

Staff Group	Registration and training	Scope of justification
Consultant Radiologists	FRCR and GMC registration	Diagnostic examinations Interventional examinations
ARSAC certificate holders	GMC registration plus training approved by ARSAC committee	NM diagnostic, therapeutic and research procedures listed in personal ARSAC certificate
Dental Practitioners	Dental degree and GDC registration	General radiography of the jaw
Cardiologists	Membership of RCP and GMC registration	All cardiology procedures
Radiographers	HCPC registration and completion of in-house training programme	All general radiography
Speech and language therapists	HCPC registration and completion of in-house training programme	Video fluoroscopy

