

January 6, 2021

Position Statement on COVID-19 Vaccinations in Ontario's Medical imaging Independent Health Facilities

The Ontario Association of Radiologists (OAR) and the Ontario Association of Medical Radiation Sciences (OAMRS) welcome and support the Ontario government's Vaccine Distribution Taskforce to guide the vaccine prioritization and distribution across the province.

The OAR and OAMRS strongly recommends that the Ontario government officially include all Independent Health Facility imaging physicians, residents, fellows, medical imaging technologists and staff in the Phase 1 vaccination prioritization program to ensure equitable safety and access for critical health care professionals and their patients. A similar approach should be addressed in other areas of our health care system where such gaps exist and/or differences have been identified in the approach already adopted by other provinces.

Ontario's radiologists and medical radiation and ultrasound technologists provide approximately 25 million diagnostic imaging services annually in Ontario hospitals, Independent Health Facilities and Long-Term Care homes. These services include general x-ray, ultrasound, mammography, nuclear medicine, fluoroscopy, CT, MRI, biopsies, and interventional radiology procedures.

50% of these 25 million services are provided in Ontario's outpatient radiology and nuclear medicine clinics under the aegis of the Independent Health Facilities Act. It is critical that the Ontario vaccination plan be clarified to include the medical imaging physicians, residents, fellows and radiation and ultrasound technologists and support staff who are not specifically mentioned as being included in the Phase 1 plan. This is to protect not only these frontline health care professionals, but also the tens of thousands of patients and care givers who attend Ontario's imaging IHFs daily. In addition, many IHFs are critical to the federal government's delivery of immigration chest x-ray program affecting thousands of new Canadians who may be facing higher rates of exposure.

Radiologists, and particularly medical radiation technologists (MRT) and diagnostic medical sonographers (DMS), are directly involved in physically positioning patients and having prolonged, direct contact every day with every COVID-19 patient that comes into a facility to carry out the necessary diagnostic imaging tests, biopsies and interventional procedures for the management of virtually every disease and condition affecting Ontario patients. Direct patient contact is a core function of performing these procedures that includes preparing, positioning, and/or administering drugs, contrast agents or isotopes for every procedure performed. Risk to exposure in medical imaging has already been documented in Wave 1 of the pandemic.

MRTs and DMSs are routinely required to also visit Emergency Departments (ED), Intensive Care Units (ICU) and Long-term Care homes among other locations to ensure diagnostic examinations are carried out in compliance with the requirement of their provincially administered regulated health profession.

This position is in concert with our endorsement of the Canadian Association of Radiologists' (CAR) [Statement on Access to COVID-19 Vaccination for Medical Imaging Professionals](#).