
Aiming for Value by Establishing a Virtual Radiology Consultation Service



A new study published in *Current Problems in Diagnostic Radiology* detailed a new programme, a virtual radiology consult service, and investigated whether this new method could add value for patients, enabling direct communication between patients and radiologists.

While direct interactions between patients and diagnostic radiologists are infrequent, recent legal advancements in the United States gives patients immediate access to their test results, including their radiology reports. This could potentially raise patient curiosity in engaging in direct communication with radiologists.

A virtual consult service could help patients to review their images with a radiologist, and address any questions or provide clarification.

In this study, patients scheduled for lung cancer screening within a three-month timeframe were identified using a specialised scheduling system. They were then sent a text message asking whether they would be interested in a complimentary 15-minute consultation with a radiologist to discuss their findings.

Of 38 patients who received texts, 10 (26%) responded to the recruitment text, and nine of whom scheduled a virtual consultation. However, it is noteworthy that five out of the nine potential participants (55.5%) opted to cancel their appointments. Of the remaining four, three (75%) attended, with an overall 7.9% text-to-consult conversation rate.

The three conducted consultations had an average duration of 18 minutes each. Among them, one individual received a CT impression of Lung-RADS 4A, suggesting a suspicious status with a 5%-15% risk of cancer and a recommended follow-up for a repeat examination in three months. The other two exhibited Lung-RADS 1, with no nodules spotted. One individual had a "potentially significant" noncancerous discovery (severe coronary atherosclerosis), while the other displayed mild coronary atherosclerosis.

Within the context of patient-centered care and the growing trend of patients accessing their medical records, radiologists must strive to improve the value of their work and consider patient outreach programmes to improve their experience.

Considering the possible time-costs of consultations and increasing workload in radiology, radiology departments could benefit from identifying specific patient groups that would derive the most benefit from consultations.

Overall, the recruitment rate for the virtual service fell between the low rate of a prior phone consult line study and the higher rate seen in consultations that were integrated into other physician appointments.

Further research is required to identify the most suitable consultation method for each patient population.

Source: [Current Problems in Diagnostic Radiology](#)

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