
COMARE Report Response Designed to Improve Risk Management & Patient Care



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Ahead of the introduction of the new Basic Safety Standards Directive (BSSD) to GB and Northern Ireland law in February 2018, an expert working party has published a practical guide for hospitals to help ensure optimum dose management and patient safety when administering CT scans and X-rays. Through the standardisation of medical imaging and the uptake of good practices between now and the legal enforcement of the BSSD, it's hoped that hospitals and patients throughout the UK & Ireland will benefit from greater efficiency and experience. The guide also addresses several concerns cited in August 2014's Patient Radiation dose issues resulting from the use of CT in the UK COMARE report.

Within the response, somewhat underpinning the UK's CT Good Practice guide, is Recommendation 7, which suggests the establishment of 'multidisciplinary radiation protection champions', or Imaging Optimisation teams throughout UK&I hospitals. If formalised, these new teams will be responsible for consistent improvement and optimisation of all examinations using ionising radiation - including CT scans - to help safeguard dose and image quality.

Optimisation of scanning protocols offers significant potential for dose reduction, but such improvements take effort and can only be achieved at the local level through active promotion and cooperation between professional groups.

Subsequently, the working party are in the midst of requesting supporting guidance from the Department of Health on optimisation - ideally guidance that would include a requirement for radiology services to consider formally creating an Imaging Optimisation team, consisting of a Radiologist, Radiographer and a Medical Physicist. A team with a set of diverse expertise and skills such as this will help ensure the best CT equipment is selected and operated for the organisation in question.

Teams would work with various stakeholders, and discuss and consult with wider groups such as their regional Medical Exposure Committee and Radiation Safety Committee regarding equipment decisions, as well as keep up-to-date with new developments in the field and apply these to local practice where appropriate.

Aside from the potential for enhancing patient safety and equipment effectiveness through dose optimisation, consistent monitoring of dose rates and practices within the hospital would also give local teams the opportunity to pinpoint areas where further safety and radiation training is required.

By acting now, the Department of Health and the NHS will benefit from a significant 'head-start' as we grow closer to the implementation of the BSSD in early 2018 which includes a special focus on equivalent and effective dose as appropriate. Hospitals across the country can familiarise themselves with good practices and focus on true optimization.

About AXREM

AXREM is the trade association representing the suppliers of diagnostic medical imaging, radiotherapy, healthcare IT and care equipment in the

UK. AXREM members supply most of the diagnostic medical imaging and radiotherapy equipment installed in UK hospitals. In doing so, our member companies and their employees work side by side with Consultant Radiologists, Radiographers and Practitioners, Oncologists and a wide range of healthcare professionals in delivering healthcare to patients using our technologies. Our members therefore have unique knowledge, experience and insight into the workflow and challenges faced by healthcare professionals on a day-to-day basis, which enables us to develop and offer innovative solutions to improve the speed and quality of diagnostic procedures and treatments with the ultimate aim of improving patient care.

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Note: Alan Birks writes on behalf of the AXREM members

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