
Online Tool 'Annotates' Radiology Reports for Lay Readers



Radiology reports often contain medical jargon that is difficult for patients to interpret and understand. New research shows that an online system that provided definitions and illustrations of the medical and technical terms in radiology reports has potential to improve patients' understanding of their reports and their diagnoses. The finding is published in the journal *Academic Radiology*.

The proliferation of patient portals has made it easier for patients to obtain their imaging results online. However, the radiology report typically is designed to communicate findings and recommendations to the referring clinician, and may contain many terms unfamiliar to lay readers.

In this study, researchers examined patients' use of a web-based interface (PORTER) that presented reports of knee MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) examinations with annotations that included lay language definitions, anatomic illustrations, and hyperlinks to additional information. The Patient-Oriented Radiology Reporter (PORTER) tool was developed to empower patients to become more engaged in their care and to better consume the knowledge within their radiology reports.

During a seven-month observational trial, a statement added to all knee MRI reports invited patients to view their annotated report online. Researchers tracked the number of patients who opened their reports, the terms they hovered over to view definitions, and the time hovering over each term. Patients who accessed their annotated reports were invited to complete a survey.

Respondents agreed that the definitions and illustrations helped them understand the report. Patients' comments suggest that they could be helped further by information that explains the causes and/or treatments of the reported findings. The comments also pointed up a need to assure that the system's images had easily readable anatomical labels and right/left labelling.

"Although PORTER was neither designed nor intended to replace conversations with a radiologist or follow up with the orthopaedic specialists who ordered the knee MRIs, patients found value in the provided definitions and illustrations, and felt that they contributed to a better understanding of their diagnoses and imaging results," the authors wrote.

The study shows that systems such as PORTER have potential to help patients better understand their radiology results and the role of radiology and radiologists in the delivery of high-quality medical care, the authors added.

Source: [Academic Radiology](#)

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