



THE IONISING RADIATION (MEDICAL EXPOSURE) REGULATIONS

NOTES ON GOOD PRACTICE FOR CLINICIANS REFERRING PATIENTS FOR INVESTIGATIONS, PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS INVOLVING IONISING RADIATION

Trust Clinical Guideline CG-RAD/2024/003 - All Sites

The Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposures) Regulations, IRMER, require the Trust to have written procedures in place covering examinations and treatments using ionising radiation. They also specify legal duties required of referrers (person requesting the examination), practitioners (e.g., radiologists, cardiologists, etc) and Operators (Person making the radiation exposure, e.g., a Radiographer). All duty holders have a legal duty to comply with their employer's procedures and IRMER. This clinical guideline is based on the national 'Pause and Check' campaign and UHDB Imaging's local version of this, 'PATIENTCheck'. It represents a shortened summary of the main duties of referrers, who should check Trust policy and the regulations for a complete list of duties and responsibilities. .

Requests for medical radiation exposures are legal documents and must be completed accurately. IRMER requires each request to be Justified, a process required by law in which the practitioner will ensure that the benefits outweigh the risks, and that the examination or procedure is the most appropriate for the patient. The decision is based on the clinical information provided by the referrer and the practitioner will consider if the diagnostic or therapeutic benefit of the requested examination or procedure can be obtained by other means posing lower risk. The examination or procedure requested may be changed as part of the justification process; requests which cannot be justified must be refused. Practitioners and operators may request further information from referrers to enable Justification.

The regulations are intended to:



- ☢ Protect patients from unintended, excessive, or incorrect medical exposures.
- ☢ Ensure the benefits outweigh the risk in every case.
- ☢ Make certain patients receive no more than the required exposure for the desired benefit, within technological limits.

REFERRER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- ☢ BY LAW (regulation 10.5 of IRMER) The referrer shall supply the practitioner with sufficient medical data (such as previous diagnostic information or medical records) relevant to the medical exposure requested by the referrer to enable the practitioner to decide on whether there is a sufficient net benefit as required by regulation 11(1)(b).

On all occasions that IRMER regulations are breached

- ☢ An investigation is undertaken by the Trust which is reviewed by the appropriate Medical Physics Expert and reported to the CQC if deemed appropriate. If you have contributed to the breach by your actions, then you may be subject to sanction by the Trust, or in extreme cases regulators or professional bodies.
- ☢ The CQC and Duty of Candour require that patients are informed of unintended, excessive, or incorrect medical exposures sufficient to be a reportable breach of IRMER, unless considered not in their best interests. On occasions it will be the family who are informed. In all cases, it is most appropriate that the referrer informs their patient, or their family, supported by staff from the 'radiation department' as necessary.

P	Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that the correct patient and correct episode of care have been written / selected. • Check hospital number corresponds to intended patient details before confirming this in any automated check. • Make checks on pregnancy or breast feeding when requesting examinations or procedures where this is relevant. • Make sure it is safe / possible for the patient to undergo the requested examination. (Mobility requirements, obesity, allergies, renal function).
A	Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you have indicated the anatomical area to be examined. Make a specific check regarding laterality. • Make sure you have specified the imaging modality (X-ray / CT / MRI / Ultrasound / Nuclear Medicine) required.
T	Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include any delay required before the examination is performed or requirement for the examination on a specific date as part of the clinical information, including the rationale for this. • Do not make requests for examinations dependent on things which have not yet happened. (Check x-rays before lines have been inserted or post-op x-rays prior to surgery).
I	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the Imaging department of anything which may affect the conduct of the examination. This will allow patients to be given appropriate appointments and increase the chances of a successful examination. • In most cases referrers are required to inform patients of errors resulting in significant unnecessary or additional radiation dose.
E	Ensure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you avoid unnecessarily exposing your patient to radiation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering alternative investigations which do not use ionising radiation. • Check previous examinations / investigations. • Ensure you include all relevant clinical and other information in your request. • Ensure you include contact details in your request. • Ensure electronic requests are made on you own log-in. • Ensure you are entitled to make the request. Non-medical staff may only request imaging examinations under protocols agreed with the Imaging Department. • Ensure that systems are in place to review the result of the examination promptly upon receipt. These should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system to identify when an expected result has not been received. • A system to ensure arrangements to review any outstanding results if the patient leaves your care.
N	Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document the outcome of any review of images you perform in the patient's hospital record. • Document your request in the patient's notes / hospital records to help ensure other staff are aware of the request.
T	Tell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the patient about why they are having the examination or procedure you are requesting and about its risks and benefits. • Tell the patient how and when they will get their results, or who to contact to find out. • Tell patients the result of their examination or procedure, regardless of the result.
Check		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your request thoroughly so you are sure the patient, clinician and clinical information supplied is complete and accurate. • If you have any concerns about if, or what, to request check trust protocols, national guidance, e.g., iRefer when requesting Imaging examinations, or the relevant department before requesting an examination or procedure. • Check and act on results promptly upon receipt. • Make sure you have completed any patient safety questions accurately
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: space-between;">  <div style="text-align: center;"> <h2 style="margin: 0;">PAUSE AND CHECK - MAKE SURE IT'S RIGHT FIRST TIME</h2> </div>  </div>		

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