

Radiologist shortages are negatively impacting patient care

The RCR clinical radiology UK workforce census 2019



More than **2/3** of radiology departments say they do not have enough radiologists to provide safe and effective care for patients

Only **1%** of NHS trusts and health boards are able to **report all scans** within radiologists' contracted hours



The radiologist workforce will be understaffed by

43%

(3,331 radiologists) by 2024, unless urgent action is taken



The NHS spent **£108 million** on **outsourcing** scans in 2019 – equivalent to the salaries of 1,200 radiologists

Nearly half of trusts/health boards (**46%**) do not have enough **interventional radiologists** to run a **safe service**

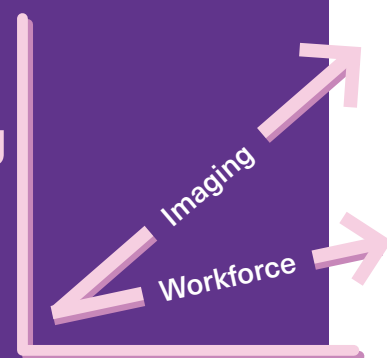


Supply from UK specialist training in 2020 will not even fill half of the

466 consultant radiology vacancies



Over the past year, demand for **complex MRI and CT imaging** has increased by **9%** but the workforce has only grown by **3%**



Severe workforce shortages in diagnostic and interventional radiology must be addressed to improve patient care and outcomes

The feedback to our 2019 UK radiology workforce census makes for sobering reading. Despite the pivotal role of imaging expertise in modern healthcare, our workforce remains understaffed by at least one-third – or 1,800 consultant radiologists – and workforce shortages are having a significant detrimental effect on patient care. While highly motivated to provide the best experience for patients, many radiologists are becoming increasingly demoralised because of mounting service pressures.

Imaging technology is continually advancing – with the advent of augmented scanners and rapidly developing artificial intelligence programmes – and is crucial to day-to-day patient care. The NHS carries out more than 100,000 imaging examinations across the UK every day. Imaging and interventional radiology are fundamental to major trauma services, the assessment and treatment of stroke, cancer diagnosis and treatment and a wide range of other life-changing diagnoses and vital services.

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My main concern is unsafe patient care.

Radiologist shortages are having an undeniable, direct impact on the cost and quality of patient care. Seven out of ten clinical directors of UK radiology departments feel they do not have enough radiology consultants to deliver safe care and outsourcing costs have reached £108 million – an increase of 32% in just 12 months. Radiologist shortages are negatively impacting waiting times, report turnaround times and overall system performance, and more recently the impact has

been compounded by pension rules forcing doctors to reduce their working hours to avoid punitive tax bills.

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We are unable to provide a continuous and sustainable ... seven-day and out-of-hours service.

To achieve ambitions for early diagnosis and high-quality patient care – such as those set out in the NHS England/Improvement *Long Term Plan* – an increase in the radiologist workforce is essential and overdue. This can and should be achieved through a combination of increased training places, international recruitment and improved workforce retention. Service development is also necessary, including the establishment of radiology networks which, if effectively implemented, have the potential to increase access to specialist expertise.

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Our dependence on outsourcing threatens the service.

Our current imaging and interventional radiology services are unsustainable; governments and policy-makers from across the sector and from all four nations must take action. Improvements in workforce planning and increased funding are urgently needed to meet growing demand, ensure a sustainable radiology workforce and deliver the high-quality radiology services that patients need and deserve.

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There are now no longer sufficient fully trained radiologists in the department to adequately provide both safe acute and cancer care.

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We have a fragile workforce under relentless pressure.

The full clinical radiology UK workforce census 2019 report can be found on the RCR website: www.rcr.ac.uk/radiology/census

Above quotes are from clinical directors of radiology departments (collected through the 2019 census).