

# The clinical radiology UK workforce census 2018

More consultant clinical radiologists are essential for patients to receive high-quality care



**3 in 5**

consultant clinical radiologist vacancies have remained unfilled for a year or more

**98%**

of trusts and health boards were unable to meet their reporting requirements within radiologists' contracted hours in 2018



The current shortfall of **1,104** radiologists is forecast to rise to

**1,867** by 2023



**3/4**

of clinical directors of radiology departments feel there are insufficient clinical radiologists to deliver safe and effective patient care

Estimated expenditure on outsourcing and insourcing has trebled to

**£165 million**

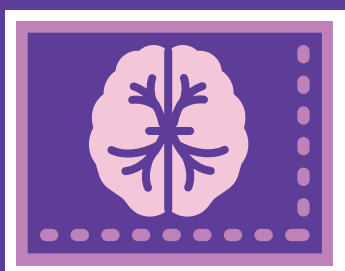
since 2014. This expenditure could fund 1,887 full-time consultant radiologists



Demand for complex imaging scans such as CT and MRI has increased by

**10%**

per year for the past five years



In 2019, around 154 radiology trainees will enter the UK consultant workforce – insufficient to fill even

**50%**

of the vacancies reported in 2018





# Patients and consultants are being negatively impacted by radiology workforce shortages: Severe workforce shortages in diagnostic and interventional radiology must be addressed urgently to maintain consultant wellbeing and ensure patients receive the care they need and deserve.

Clinical radiologists, both diagnostic and interventional, are fundamental to the management of patients. Prompt and appropriate imaging, diagnosis and intervention improve patient outcomes and avoid unnecessary procedures.

The results of the RCR 2018 census provide alarming evidence of a severe and growing shortage of consultant clinical radiologists, to the extent that three in four clinical directors of UK radiology departments feel there are too few clinical radiologists to deliver a safe and effective level of patient care.

Demand for diagnostic radiology has increased significantly over recent years. This is largely due to considerable growth in the volume and complexity of imaging; the volume of computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans has increased by an average of 500,000 every year for the past five years in England (equating to a 10% rise year on year).<sup>1</sup> Demand for minimally invasive image-guided interventional radiology procedures has also increased.

Workforce growth has not kept pace with demand. Radiology departments report that they are unable to recruit the staff they need, with six in ten consultant clinical radiologist vacancies remaining unfilled for 12 months or more. With persistent workforce shortages, only 2% of UK trusts/health boards were able to meet their reporting requirements within consultant clinical radiologists' contracted hours in 2018.

Comparing this to the 8% reported in 2014, it is evident that workforce shortfalls have increased.

A large number of long-term vacancies, two-thirds of which are not covered by locums, means that many consultant clinical radiologists are working longer hours to cover workforce gaps. Increased workload over a prolonged period leads to stress and burnout, which in turn can lead to adverse patient outcomes. In 2018 one in three consultant clinical radiologists reported that they were experiencing work-related stress and that it negatively affects their work.<sup>2</sup>

Radiology expenditure has spiralled as departments attempt to meet reporting demands. In 2018, radiology departments spent an estimated £165 million on outsourcing to teleradiology companies, insourcing\* and the employment of ad hoc locums. This figure is almost triple the expenditure reported in 2014 and is equivalent to the combined salaries of 1,887 full-time consultant clinical radiologists.<sup>3</sup>

Worryingly, the situation is likely to worsen. The 2018 workforce census forecasts that the current shortfall of 1,104 full-time consultant clinical radiologists (23% shortfall) will rise to 1,867 full-time consultant clinical radiologists (31% shortfall) by 2023.

The 2018 census data highlight the urgent need for:

- The UK Government and health education departments to increase substantially the number of funded radiology trainee places
- NHS employing organisations to foster a supportive workplace culture and offer flexible employment options, to maximise retention of valuable clinical radiology skills, knowledge and experience.

If current and forecast future shortages of consultant clinical radiologists are not addressed now, diagnoses and treatments will be delayed and patients will suffer.

Read the full report of the findings of the 2018 clinical radiology census online at [www.rcr.ac.uk/radiology/census](http://www.rcr.ac.uk/radiology/census)

## References

1. [www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostic-imaging-dataset/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostic-imaging-dataset/) (last accessed 7/3/19)
2. The Royal College of Radiologists. *Membership Engagement Survey 2018*. London: The Royal College of Radiologists, 2018.
3. NHS Employers. *Pay and conditions circular (M&D) 1/2018*. London: NHS Employers, 2018.

\*Paid reporting by departments' radiologists, additional to core contracted hours.