

# Who shares wins: efficient, collaborative radiology solutions

**The recent RCR radiology workforce census shows that there are huge vacancy levels among radiologists around the country and the NHS spends large sums of money on private teleradiology reporting. The RCR believes that local radiologists must continue to work at local hospitals to support referring clinicians, radiographers and administrative staff. However, investment by the NHS in its own NHS Network Teleradiology Platform (NTP) solutions would lay the foundation for more collaborative working across clinical networks. Night-time radiology reporting could be made much more efficient and cost effective by reporting at network levels using NTPs. NTPs could also allow sharing of expertise between hospitals (eg paediatric radiology, head and neck radiology etc) – specialties which are often supported by only one radiologist in a small hospital.**

There are very significant reporting backlogs across NHS hospitals as shown by the recent RCR backlog surveys.<sup>1-3</sup> In England, Sustainability and Transformation Plans are looking at solutions for collaborative working and efficient use of workforce across their groups of trusts. NTPs provide an information technology (IT) infrastructure for sharing reporting capacity, rather than paying large sums of money to private teleradiology providers for backlog reporting. In addition, NTP would support network-based on-call for stroke physicians and neurosurgeons thereby enhancing the currently inadequate stroke service in most parts of the UK, and would also support network-based multidisciplinary team meetings (MDTMs).

A recent Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) survey found that, across the NHS, systems for sharing imaging studies (mainly X-rays and scans) and their reports between hospitals are woefully inadequate, leading to unnecessary delays and potentially to patient harm. These problems can, and do, impact upon patient care. Radiologists and oncologists are deeply frustrated by the difficulties encountered when sharing imaging studies between local and regional hospitals.

NTPs, set up on a regional basis throughout the UK, integrated with a vendor neutral index (VNI) would solve many of the current inadequacies of healthcare in the NHS today. Sharing imaging studies via a VNI would:

- Give radiologists, and other doctors, immediate access to all their patients' previous imaging studies and their reports across the region. These would be available on their local picture archiving and communication system (PACS), even if those imaging examinations were performed in different hospitals in the region
- Stop delays to patient care while imaging studies are requested and sent from one hospital to another, and then uploaded to the relevant IT systems for viewing, comparison and additional reporting (addenda).

Investment by the NHS in regional NTPs with an integrated VNI does not require replacement of existing local RIS-PACS solutions. It connects existing IT systems to enable collaborative working and sharing in a patient-centric way. The RCR publication *Who shares wins: efficient, collaborative radiology solutions* provides practical guidance for NHS departments and Sustainability and Transformation Plan leads (STPs), detailing precisely how they could work collaboratively and also share effectively.

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## References

1. The Royal College of Radiologists. *Unreported X-rays, computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans: Results of a snapshot survey of English National Health Service (NHS) trusts*. London: The Royal College of Radiologists, 2015.
2. The Royal College of Radiologists. *Unreported X-rays, computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) examinations: results of the September 2015 snapshot survey of English NHS acute trusts*. London: The Royal College of Radiologists, 2015.
3. The Royal College of Radiologists. *Diagnostic radiology – our patients are still waiting ...* London: The Royal College of Radiologists, 2016.

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Find out more at [www.rcr.ac.uk/who-shares-wins](http://www.rcr.ac.uk/who-shares-wins)

# 9%

VACANCY

consultant  
radiologist  
posts vacant

2014–2015 UK radiology spend  
on outsourcing estimated at

£88.2 million

230,000

patients waiting over a month  
for their imaging test results

54%  
respondents had difficulty  
accessing images from external PACS

Over half

of respondents said patient  
care suffered due to delays  
in accessing images and  
reports from other hospitals

# 75%

respondents were delayed  
accessing external  
images and reports

51%

respondents had no access  
to external PACS for imaging  
studies performed elsewhere

# 86%

respondents said that  
administrative staff had to  
import images and reports and  
were not available out of hours

# 89%

respondents said instant access  
to images and reports would  
improve turnaround times

88% respondents agreed that  
instant access to external  
images and reports would  
reduce healthcare costs

