



Frequently Asked Questions: Radiology Quality Review

Why did Niagara Health System decide to conduct this quality review?

This review was prompted by a patient complaint. This complaint that was escalated through our usual processes led us to identify discrepancies with some readings of one radiologist. We are continuously striving to be the safest health system for all of our patients, and we are committed to continuous learning and improvement. A number of hospitals have undertaken similar quality reviews with a view to quality improvement. Quality reviews in various areas are part of every hospital's quality improvement process.

Who conducted the quality review and what are their qualifications?

Dr. Brian Yemen is Site Chief for Diagnostic Imaging, Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre and McMaster University Medical Centre at Hamilton Health Sciences. He oversaw the quality review working with RTM (Realtime Medical), a group of Ontario-based radiologists who specialize in diagnostic imaging reviews. Dr. Yemen and RTM have extensive experience conducting reviews for other hospitals.

How did the quality review work?

The external review team of radiologists conducted a rigorous review guided by the Canadian Patient Safety Institute's framework. The radiologists examined all of the CTs, MRIs and mammography readings conducted by the NHS radiologist between May 2014 and May 2015. Any tests the review team identified that could potentially have impacted patient care were reassessed by a clinical review team, made up of specialist physicians and other medical experts from NHS, to determine if any follow up care was required. A final report detailing the review findings was prepared by Dr. Yemen.

How did NHS support patients during the review process?

Throughout the review, our team took immediate steps to contact physicians and patients in any cases where changes were needed to treatment plans or patient records. If follow up care was required at the hospital, we expedited these appointments to ensure those patients were seen without delay.

In most cases where a discrepancy was identified, the various checkpoints that are embedded into our quality and safety processes had already identified this discrepancy. And in most of these cases, the patient's physician had already taken action without negative impact to the patient's care.

How can patients have confidence with their Diagnostic Imaging tests at NHS?

NHS has a number of quality assurance processes built into all aspects of our programs and services, including within the Diagnostic Imaging Department.

From time to time, we identify a need to make an addendum to a patient's previously read radiology scan. This can arise for a number of reasons and speaks to the various checkpoints that are embedded into our quality and safety processes. A Diagnostic Imaging scan is one piece of the clinical picture in determining a patient's diagnosis and care plan. There are a number of other tests and assessments that are conducted by the team of healthcare providers, and clinicians looking at all of this information as a whole to determine a patient's diagnosis, treatment and follow-up plan.

As an added layer of quality control, we introduced a peer review program in our Diagnostic Imaging department in which all NHS radiologists randomly review each other's readings. This program was launched in July 2015 after a number of months of planning.

What if I had a CT, MRI or mammography exam before May 2014 or after May 2015?

This review is specific to CT and MRI scans and mammography exams read by one radiologist between May 2014 and May 2015. Based on the findings of the quality review, there is no information pointing to concerns outside of the scope of the review.

What if I still have concerns?

We understand that this review was worrisome for some patients and families. Our community access line set up during the review will remain open for one week in the event members of the public have questions or concerns related to CT, MRI or mammography exams performed at NHS between May 2014 and May 2015. The direct number is 905-397-1905. Patients are also encouraged to contact their family physicians or other primary care providers directly if they have concerns about their health.

Thanking our community

We would like to express our appreciation to the community for its co-operation and understanding as we worked through this process. We are grateful for the positive feedback we received about how patient cases involved in the review were managed. Our patients are well-educated healthcare consumers, and this quality review was about being partners with them to improve the work we do.