

No. 44: Reducing diagnostic errors related to medical imaging

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Provision of high-value health care requires an accurate diagnosis. This complex process is susceptible to error, potentially leading to significant patient harm. The issue of diagnostic errors is particularly relevant to the diagnostic imaging sector.

There is limited data on the incidence of diagnostic errors related to medical imaging despite significant investment of public funds to improve patient access to diagnostic imaging and increasing Medicare expenditure in the past 5 years. As a result, there is an absence of a co-ordinated national strategy to prevent diagnostic errors and maximise patient outcomes from diagnostic imaging.

Recommendations

Opportunities exist to measure the incidence and consequences of diagnostic errors related to medical imaging, through the Medical Indemnity Best Practice data set. Contemporary analysis of this data will establish the extent of the problem and support the development and implementation of interventions that address shortcomings in the diagnostic process.

Further efforts to enhance the availability of patient-level data will be critical in assessing diagnostic imaging's value to the diagnostic process and guiding health policy.

Recommendations are made to improve the use of diagnostic imaging within the diagnostic process:

- Amend Medicare regulations or the implementation of minimum data requirements through eReferral in My Health Record to improve the quality of imaging referrals.
- Invest in the development and implementation of strategies to encourage the appropriate use of diagnostic imaging.
- Proactive strategies to address ethical and governance concerns related to the rapid uptake of artificial intelligence applications for medical imaging.
- Encourage uptake of My Health Record by diagnostic imaging practices to enhance information sharing.
- Improve radiologist/referrer communication through the implementation of structured report templates.

