



ASMIRT Position Statement

Personal Protective Equipment for Medical Radiation Practitioners during the COVID-19 Pandemic **MEDICAL IMAGING AND RADIATION THERAPY ACCESS TO PPE**

Call for Action

Australian governments must ensure that all public and private medical imaging and radiation oncology departments have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Medical Radiation Practitioners are frontline healthcare workers responsible for producing medical images, including x-ray, CT, MRI, ultrasound and nuclear medicine, and for delivering radiation therapy treatment to patients with cancer.

In the course of their duties, diagnostic radiographers will be in direct contact with suspected or known COVID-19 patients, whether in emergency departments, ICUs, or in instances where COVID-19 patients are sent directly to medical imaging departments for their examinations. At the same time, they will be delivering services to significant numbers of uninfected patients. Radiation therapists deliver highly specialised treatment to potentially immunocompromised patients, making precautionary measures necessary in radiation oncology. The nature of the work that medical radiation practitioners perform in both medical imaging and radiation therapy means it is not possible to maintain “social distancing”, putting staff and patients at risk.

It is imperative that medical radiation practitioner staff are protected appropriately to ensure adequate staffing levels during this pandemic. If medical imaging or radiation oncology departments are impacted by significant staff shortages, then the ability to deliver routine care to patients will be jeopardized.

There is growing literature to support the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical radiation practitioners. (1,2,3,4) Ideally PPE should include gloves, gowns, protective goggles or face shields and facemasks, whilst working with patients with a known or suspected COVID-19 infection. While the current issues around disruptions to the global supply chain of PPE (5) are noted, the importance of providing a safe workplace cannot be underestimated or ignored. With community transmission of COVID-19 an ongoing concern, the true rate remains largely unknown due to strict testing criteria that has limited the testing of the general population. Transmission of the COVID-19 virus to healthcare workers is already evident in Victoria (6,7) and New South Wales (8) hence the urgency to protect our medical imaging and radiation therapy workforce now.

It is imperative to provide medical radiation practitioners with appropriate PPE, to protect these vital healthcare workers and ensure continuity of services for medical imaging and delivery of treatment to patients. Immediate adoption of these preventative measures and recommendations will assist in minimizing the risk of infection while safely delivering care to patients.



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