

Ionising Radiations (Medical Exposure) Regulations, 2000

Referral Criteria for General Practitioners

Imaging and Nuclear Medicine Department

Introduction

The Ionising Radiations (Medical Exposure) Regulations, 2000 (IR(ME)R) requires that all Referrals for procedures involving ionising radiation only be accepted from medical or dental practitioners or other health professionals that are recognised by the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust.

The Trust is also required to supply its Referrers with Referral Criteria that specify the information required by the IR(ME)R Practitioner, whose is responsible for justifying the exposure.

Purpose

This document satisfies the requirements of IR(ME)R Regulation 4(3)(a).

Readership

These referral criteria are for the attention of any General Practitioner wishing to refer patients for x-ray and nuclear medicine scans to an Imaging and Nuclear Medicine Department at any site under the management of Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust.

Description

The Regulations require Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals to establish Criteria for Referrers. These detail the minimum information required by the IR(ME)R Practitioner (or Operator working under their Guidelines) to justify an exposure considering the benefits to the patient and the risks involved in the procedure. These Criteria contain information on the use of the Imaging and Nuclear Medicine Departments.

Any referral not complying with these criteria will be returned to the Practice of Referring GP to be corrected.

Radiology will generally be carried out in accordance with the guidelines laid down in 6th edition of 'Making the best use of a Department of Clinical Radiology - Guidelines for Doctors' available from the Royal College of Radiologists <http://mbur.nhs.uk/index.asp>

Nuclear Medicine protocols are based on 6th edition of the above Guidelines and with Guidelines from the British Nuclear Medicine Society, available from www.bnms.org.uk/guidelines.htm and/or <http://www.eanm.org>

Referral Criteria are available for General Practitioners as follows:-

Referral Criteria for GPs

- Direct communication to Surgeries from the PCT.

General Information

1. GPs can request nuclear medicine scans, plain radiography, barium swallows (*not* to the Royal Alexandra Hospital), IVUs, barium enemas at Princess Royal Hospital only (who have had sigmoidoscopy performed).
2. Referrals must come from a registered healthcare practitioner. Non medically qualified staff must be individually approved by the Trust.
3. It is the duty of the Practice Management/Senior Partner to ensure complicity with 2 above and bring these Criteria to the notice of all GPs in the Practice. The Trust will be notified of changes in staff through the normal route, i.e. the notification to the PAS managers at the Royal Sussex County Hospital and Princess Royal Hospital, who then forward the data to the Imaging and Nuclear Medicine Department system.
4. The Referrer must be clearly identifiable, with a signature and printed name.
5. Referrals must include the full Practice address and contact phone number.
6. Referral information must be clear, legible and include:-
 - Full name
 - Full address
 - Date of referral
 - Hospital number or NHS number
 - Date of Birth
 - Gender
 - Date of LMP if female between the ages of 12 and 60
 - Is patient breastfeeding or pregnant?
 - Is transport required?
 - Is the exposure for medico-legal, occupational health, screening or research reasons?
7. High dose examinations that encompass the uterus (eg IVU/Ba Enema/CT Abdomen) on patients aged between 12-60 yrs who are of childbearing capacity may only be done if the “10 day rule” is satisfied i.e. the patient is within 10 days of the start of their last menstrual period
8. Low dose examinations that encompass the uterus (e.g. Abdomen/Pelvis/Lumbar spine) on patients aged between 12-60 yrs who are of childbearing capacity may only be done if the “28 day rule” is satisfied i.e. the patient is within 28 days of the start of their last menstrual period

Medical Information

1. Relevant information must be supplied including:-
 - Clear, correct and relevant clinical details
 - Suggested examination including a clear statement of anatomical site and laterality if relevant.

Referral Criteria for GPs

- Other relevant information e.g. allergy to x-ray contrast media, disabilities, language difficulties.
- Pre-existing medical conditions requiring special consideration.
- Date and place of last x-ray or nuclear medicine scan if known.

Specific Information (by Examination)

Lumbar Spines

- It is recognised that MRI is nearly always the method of choice for imaging the spine. Plain radiographs deliver a radiation dose to the patient and may be falsely reassuring.
- General Practitioners should always refer to “The Active Back Programme: flow chart” for management guidance. (Tel/Fax 01273 242015).
- For paediatric patients under the age of 16 years, the 10 day rule will apply in all cases.

Abdomens/Pelvis/Hips

- GP referrals presenting more than 28 days since the LMP will only be radiographed after consultation with an IR(ME)R Practitioner.
- For paediatric patients under the age of 16 years, the 10 day rule will apply in all cases.

Cancellation

If it is discovered that an examination that has been requested is no longer necessary, the Referrer must ensure the Imaging and Nuclear Medicine Department is notified immediately to prevent an unnecessary exposure being made.

Typical Doses

The Regulations say that Referral Criteria must contain typical dose information. For the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust these are as follows:-

Simple Examination	Effective Dose (mSv)	Scan (Nuclear Medicine)	Effective Dose (mSv)
Chest PA	0.02	Bone Planar	3
Lumbar Spine AP	0.25	Bone SPECT	5
Lumbar Spine Lat	0.20	Thyroid uptake and Imaging	1
Lumbar Spine LSJ	0.20		
Abdomen AP	0.40		
Pelvis AP	0.40		

Normal background is approximately 2.5 mSv per year. Further interpretation of dose is available in 'Making the best use of a Department of Clinical Radiology - Guidelines for Doctors'.

This list will be expanded and updated as more data becomes available

Research

If you are involved in research projects that involve the use of x-rays, please contact the Clinical Governance and IR(ME)R Manager (Imaging and Nuclear Medicine) at the Trust for further advice (01273 696955 ext. 7959 or 7629).

Further Information

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