

IMAGING TESTS: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR APPROPRIATE USE OF THE RADIOLOGY DEPARTMENT:

The radiologists have traditionally been service providers for our clinical colleagues. Radiology was a speciality that was consigned to the back rooms, practiced by unknown men and women who would emerge from these darkened room from time to time to sign their report. They had little (or no) input into the selection of the imaging tests applied to the patient populations. This has over time led to an expectation from the clinicians that whatever they ask or will be carried out without any argument .

As the face of Radiology has evolved in the world so it has in Pakistan. Radiology is one of the fastest growing specialities in medicine and the radiologists of the world have evolved into clinical radiologists. They have come out of the back rooms into front line and are now as much part of the patient care team as the primary care physicians. Although world wide the transition has led to the use of the radiology services under the direction of the radiologists this trend unfortunately is not as strong in Pakistan as it should be.

Generally (Of course with exceptions) the clinicians still feel that they can dictate the use of imaging and feel that they are equally (if not more) qualified not only to decide the test to use but also to read it. This leads to two adverse outcomes. One; the patients miss out on the appropriate use of the imaging and the interpretation is often suboptimal. Two; a large number of research using radiology data is carried out by non radiologists..

Radiologists are still routinely being asked to perform inappropriate examinations for example: skull xrays for headaches. It is down to the radiologists to educate the referring physicians and modify their behaviour. We also have to assert our moral right to the data that is generated by radiologists, be it images or the reports that accompany these images. Unless we do this we will miss out on the opportunity that radiology provides.

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