

July 2007

GUIDELINES

for professional conduct for Radiographers,
Radiation Therapists and Sonographers



Australian Institute of Radiography

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Guidelines for professional conduct for Radiographers, Radiation Therapists and Sonographers

These guidelines are issued by the Australian Institute of Radiography (AIR) to guide and support members in the practice of their profession.

The terms *Radiographer* and *Radiation Therapist* when used in these Guidelines, mean a person who possesses a Statement of Accreditation issued by the AIR or an equivalent qualification approved by Council of the AIR.

The term *Sonographer* refers to health-care workers who have received specific theoretical and practical training in diagnostic ultrasound, culminating in the award of a qualification acceptable to the Australasian Sonographers Accreditation Registry (ASAR).

The term *Practitioner* may be used in this document to encompass members of the three disciplines.

These guidelines set standards that may not apply in all circumstances but allow discretion to be used within those standards.

There are two parts to the guidelines provided for each of the disciplines

- The Code of Practice; and
- Guidance Notes that should be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice to help with day-to-day activities of practitioners.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the AIR. Any queries or comments on these guidelines and requests for further copies should be addressed to:

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CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RADIOGRAPHERS

- 1 The prime concern of radiographers shall be for the welfare and safety of patients, staff and the public.
- 2 Radiographers are personally accountable for their work and professional conduct.
- 3 Radiographers should only accept requests for examinations which are properly authorised in accordance with established or recognised criteria. Radiographers should not carry out a procedure that may be considered dangerous without first confirming instructions for the procedure with the person authorised who has made the request, and satisfying themselves that the instructions contain no error.
- 4 Radiographers, recognising their responsibility to the patient, should alert medically significant findings to the medical personnel responsible for the patient's treatment and at the request of such personnel may provide an opinion that lies within their knowledge and expertise.
- 5 A radiographer shall respect a patient's right to privacy and shall also respect the confidentiality of information relating to patients and their families.
- 6 Radiographers shall ensure that their professional responsibilities and standards of practice are not adversely influenced by considerations of religion, sex, race, nationality, party politics, social or economic status or the nature of a patient's condition.
- 7 Radiographers should at all times endeavour to work and co-operate in a collaborative manner with professional colleagues and members of other health professions so that the patient and the public may benefit.
- 8 Radiographers shall uphold the honour and dignity of the profession and not engage in any activity that may bring the profession into disrepute. Radiographers are responsible for reporting unethical conduct within the profession to their respective State Branch of the AIR.
- 9 Radiographers shall at all times have regard to and shall observe laws and regulations applicable to their practice in their State.
- 10 Radiographers are responsible for their own professional development to ensure the maintenance of the highest standard of knowledge, skill and attitude. Professional development is achieved through activities involving critical reflection on clinical experience, engaging in post-graduate education, workplace based learning, research and publication. Guidelines for Continuing Professional Development are contained in the publication *Guide to AIR Continuing Professional Development Triennial Program* which also describes the requirements for the issue of a current Validated Statement of Accreditation.
- 11 In the field of research, a radiographer shall observe the requirements of duly constituted institutional ethics committees, and the ethical principles and standards as set down by the relevant State, National and International organisations. A radiographer shall also observe principles governing intellectual property, copyright and due acknowledgement in scientific publication, and openly declare all financial and non-financial interests in the course of reported scientific findings.

Guidance Notes for Radiographers

- 1** (i) Radiographers should take all reasonable care to ensure that their working conditions are such that the safety of patients, staff and the public is adequately provided for.
 - (ii) Radiographers should maintain their working environment in a safe and hygienic condition according to occupational health and safety requirements so as to avoid adverse effects to patients or staff.
 - (iii) Radiographers should be aware of and adhere to work practices as laid down by relevant authorities. Reviews of such work practices and adequate checking procedures to ensure that such work practices are being adhered to, should be included in the routine Quality Assurance Program for the facility.
 - (iv) Radiographers should ensure that techniques and items of equipment employed in radiographic procedures are safe. This includes an awareness of possible bio effects and compliance with recommended safety standards and protocols.
 - (v) Radiographers should have concern for the security of pharmaceuticals, patients' valuables and other general security matters.
- 2** (i) Radiographers should at all times perform their duties to the best of their ability with due regard for their patient's safety and welfare.
 - (ii) Radiographers should not perform duties beyond their level of education, training and competence.
- 3** (i) Radiographers in some States and Territories may undertake fluoroscopy without a Radiologist being present if, in their professional judgement, the patient's condition warrants the use of that procedure.
 - (ii) Radiographers may provide descriptions of images as part of an accepted written protocol that is authorised by the employing authority.
 - (iii) Radiographers may be involved in the provision of limited Venepuncture in Medical Imaging. The AIR has published guidelines for the conduct of this procedure.
- 4** (i) Radiographers have a general responsibility to provide information and an opinion that lies within their knowledge and expertise and they should take reasonable precautions to ensure that such information and opinion are both accurate and appropriate in the circumstances of the case.
 - (ii) Radiographers should endeavour to protect the public from misinformation or misrepresentation of information regarding medical imaging. When wishing to inform the public of any such information, radiographers should bring the matter to the attention of their State Branch of the AIR.

- (iii) Radiographers should at all times take care when releasing information to the media that their comments are, to their knowledge, truthful and not likely to place the practice of their profession in disrepute.
 - (iv) The confidentiality of information concerning patients and their families is a fundamental convention. Access to such information or records should be restricted to those staff who have need to use that information.
- 5**
- (i) Radiographers should act as part of the health care 'team' and accept responsibility relevant to their professional experience when assisting subordinates, peers or other health care professionals.
 - (ii) Radiographers should approach the referring medical practitioner with any questions or objections regarding any request which they consider is or may be inappropriate or which may need clarification.
 - (iii) Radiographers should not recommend a particular medical practitioner or a medical practice unless a member of the public who is seeking medical advice specifically asks for such recommendation.
- 6**
- Radiographers shall not engage in conduct which would bring the profession into disrepute whether by acting unlawfully or improperly or by disregarding the reasonably accepted standards of behaviour both within and outside their profession or otherwise. They shall not:
- (i) Issue false or misleading statements.
 - (ii) Allow others to use their name, qualifications, address or photograph in connection with the distribution to the public of any medical product or the provision of their professional services for the purposes of obtaining personal or professional advantage.
 - (iii) Canvas directly for patients.
 - (iv) Misconduct themselves with a patient in a sexual or other physical manner.
 - (v) Attend a patient while their judgement is impaired by alcohol or drugs.
 - (vi) Fraudulently misrepresent to a patient the duties they have performed with the intent to obtain additional payments.
- 7**
- (i) Radiographers may advertise in a newspaper regarding the commencement of, absence from, or resumption of practice, the admission to, or alteration of partnership or a move to new premises by not more than four (4) insertions in that newspaper.
 - (ii) The AIR believes that a radiographer's use of awards, civil decorations, qualifications or descriptions of membership or organisations in association with their name and Radiographer Professional qualifications may create an invidious distinction between Practitioners and as a result bring the primary professional qualifications into disrepute. Practitioners should exercise restraint in the use of such designatory letters but may also use such letters where they are relevant in the context of their practice.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RADIATION THERAPISTS

- 1 The prime concern of a radiation therapist shall be for the health welfare and safety of patients, staff and the public, with particular regard to radiation safety matters.
- 2 Radiation therapists shall observe the law and professional responsibilities in all matters related to the practice of radiation therapy, and shall take responsibility for their own professional actions.
- 3 A radiation therapist shall endeavour at all times to provide a radiation therapy service to the highest standards in keeping with the philosophy and mission of the profession, and with the relevant standards, guidelines and codes of practice.
- 4 A radiation therapist shall ensure that he/she is entitled to practice in a State or Territory of Australia by complying with that State's or Territory's registration or licensing regulations.
- 5 Radiation therapists shall only accept requests for planning, treatment and associated procedures, which are properly authorised in accordance with established or recognised criteria.
- 6 Radiation therapists, recognising their responsibility to the patient shall alert medically significant findings to the medical personnel responsible for the patient's treatment and at the request of such personnel may provide an opinion that lies within their knowledge and expertise.
- 7 Radiation therapists shall not carry out or assist with procedures, where in their professional opinion the risk to the patient is greater than the benefit to be obtained by the procedure.
- 8 Radiation therapists shall respect the rights and dignity of patients and observe strict confidentiality in all matters relating to patients, their families or carers.
- 9 Radiation therapists shall ensure that their professional responsibilities and standards of practice are not adversely influenced by considerations of religion, sex, race, nationality, party politics, social or economic status or the nature of a patient's condition.
- 10 Radiation therapists shall maintain effective professional relationships with colleagues and other health professionals and a respect for their abilities and achievements.
- 11 Radiation therapists are responsible for their own professional development to ensure the maintenance of the highest standard of knowledge, skill and attitude. Professional development is achieved through activities involving critical reflection on clinical experience, engaging in post-graduate education, workplace based learning, research and publication. Guidelines for Continuing Professional Development are contained in the publication *Guide to AIR Continuing Professional Development Triennial Program* which also describes the requirements for the issue of a current Validated Statement of Accreditation.
- 12 In the field of research, a radiation therapist shall observe the requirements of duly constituted institutional ethics committees, and the ethical principles and standards as set down by the relevant State, National and International organisations. A radiation therapist shall also observe principles governing intellectual property, copyright and due acknowledgement in scientific publication, and openly declare all financial and non-financial interests in the course of reported scientific findings.

- 13 Radiation therapists shall act with honesty and integrity.
- 14 Radiation therapists shall not engage in conduct which would bring the profession into disrepute whether by acting unlawfully or improperly or by disregarding the reasonably accepted standards of behaviour both within and outside their profession or otherwise.

Guidance Notes for Radiation Therapists

- 1 (i) Radiation therapists should at all times perform their duties to the best of their ability with due regard for their patient's safety and welfare.
(ii) Radiation therapists should not perform duties beyond their level of training and competence.
- 2 (i) Radiation therapists should take all reasonable care to ensure that their working conditions comply with occupational health and safety standards.
(ii) Radiation therapists should be aware of and adhere to work practices as laid down by relevant authorities. Reviews of work practices and adequate checking procedures to ensure such work practices are being adhered to, should be included in the routine Quality Assurance Program of the establishment.
(iii) Radiation therapists should ensure that techniques and items of equipment employed in radiation therapy procedures are safe. This includes an awareness of possible bio effects and compliance with recommended safety standards and protocols.
- 3 (i) Radiation therapists have a general responsibility to provide information and an opinion that lies within their knowledge and expertise and they should take reasonable precautions to ensure that such information and opinion are both accurate and appropriate in the circumstances of the case.
(ii) Radiation therapists should approach the referring medical practitioner with any questions or objections regarding any request which they consider is or may be inappropriate or which may need clarification.
- 4 (i) Radiation therapists should act as part of the health care 'team' and accept responsibility relevant to their professional experience when assisting subordinates, peers or other health care professionals.
(ii) Radiation therapists should endeavour to protect the public from misinformation or misrepresentation of information regarding this discipline. When wishing to inform the public of any such information, radiation therapists should bring the matter to the attention of their State Branch of the AIR.

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- (iii) Radiation therapists should at all times take care when releasing information to the media that their comments are to their knowledge truthful and not likely to place the practice of their profession in disrepute.
 - (iv) Radiation therapists shall not:
 - (a) Issue false or misleading statements.
 - (b) Allow others to use their name, qualifications, address or photograph in connection with the distribution to the public of any medical product or the provision of their professional services for the purposes of obtaining personal or professional advantage.
 - (c) Canvas directly for patients.
 - (d) Misconduct themselves with a patient in a sexual or other physical manner.
 - (e) Attend a patient while their judgement is impaired by alcohol or drugs.
 - (f) Fraudulently misrepresent to a patient the duties they have performed with the intent to obtain additional payments.
 - (v) Radiation therapists should not recommend a particular medical practitioner or a medical practice unless a member of the public who is seeking medical advice specifically asks for such recommendation.
- 5**
- (i) Radiation therapists may advertise in a newspaper regarding the commencement of, absence from, or resumption of practice, the admission to, or alteration of partnership or a move to new premises by not more than four (4) insertions in that newspaper.
 - (ii) The AIR believes that radiation therapists use of awards, civil decorations, qualifications or descriptions of membership or organisations in association with their name and Radiation Therapist Professional qualifications may create an invidious distinction between practitioners and as a result bring the primary professional qualifications into disrepute. Practitioners should exercise restraint in the use of such designatory letters but may also use such letters where they are relevant in the context of their practice.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR SONOGRAPHERS

- 1 The prime concern of sonographers shall be for the safety and welfare of their patients.
- 2 Sonographers shall be accountable for their work and professional conduct.
- 3 Sonographers should ensure the comfort and safety of the patient and take all steps to allay patient anxiety. The sonographer should not relay a detailed account of the results to the patient, except by agreement with the referring doctor and then within departmental policy.
- 4 Sonographers should only accept referrals for ultrasound examinations, which are properly authorised.
- 5 Sonographers shall respect the patient's right to privacy and confidentiality.
- 6 Sonographers should base examination techniques on interpretation of the written referral and interview of the patient with regard to the relevant medical history.
- 7 It is the sonographer's role to document the examination, in order to clearly define the patient's condition, with particular emphasis on the characteristics, location and extent of any pathology, when encountered.
- 8 Sonographers should ensure that techniques and items of equipment employed in sonographic procedures are safe. This includes an awareness of possible bio effects and compliance with recommended safety standards and protocols.
- 9 Sonographers shall present the reporting sonologist with appropriate documentation of the examination performed and a written or verbal account of sonographic findings. In situations where the sonographer works in the absence of a reporting sonologist, the sonographer may be required to communicate the sonographic findings to the referring medical officer. This report should be identified as the 'sonographer's report'.
- 10 Sonographers shall ensure that their professional responsibilities and standards are not adversely influenced by considerations of religion, sex, race, nationality, politics, social, economic status or the nature of the patient's condition.
- 11 Sonographers should at all times endeavour to work and cooperate in a collaborative manner with professional colleagues and members of other health professions, so that the patient and the public may benefit.
- 12 Sonographers shall uphold the honour and dignity of the profession, and not engage in any activity which may bring the profession into disrepute by acting improperly or unlawfully or disregarding the reasonably accepted standards of behaviour both within and outside the profession.
- 13 Sonographers are responsible for reporting unethical conduct within the profession to the respective State Branch of the AIR.
- 14 Sonographers should ensure that the nature and implications of the sonographic procedure are explained to the patient and informed consent is obtained.

- 15 Sonographers are responsible for their own professional development to ensure the maintenance of the highest standard of knowledge, skill and attitude. Professional development is achieved through activities involving critical reflection on clinical experience, engaging in post-graduate education, workplace based learning, research and publication. Guidelines for CPD are contained in the publication *Guide to AIR Continuing Professional Development Triennial Program* which also describes the requirements for the issue of a current a Validated Statement of Accreditation.
- 16 In the field of research, a Sonographer shall observe the requirements of duly constituted institutional ethics committees, and the ethical principles and standards as set down by the relevant State, National and International organisations. A Sonographer shall also observe principles governing intellectual property, copyright and due acknowledgement in scientific publication, and openly declare all financial and non-financial interests in the course of reported scientific findings.

Guidance Notes for Sonographers

- 1 The term *Sonographer* is the preferred usage rather than the term *Ultrasonographer*.
- 2
 - (i) Because of the operator-dependent, interactive and dynamic characteristics of the diagnostic ultrasound examination, sonographers are delegated considerable decisional latitude in usual clinical practice.
 - (ii) Sonographers have the latitude to decide which images suitably characterise the normal and abnormal findings of the examination. They need to assess what the sonographic appearances may represent, when there is sufficient information to make an accurate diagnosis and extend the examination as required.
- 3
 - (i) Sonographers should obtain written consent from the employer to report ultrasound findings and conclusions, if this is required. This responsibility should be clearly outlined in an appropriate statement of duties.
 - (ii) A written rather than a verbal report should be provided. A copy should be filed for further reference.
 - (iii) Sonographers should clearly identify themselves as such. The designation 'Sonographer' should be at the end of each written report.
 - (iv) Sonographers should only provide information and an opinion that lies within their knowledge and expertise.

- 4** Sonographers shall not;
- (i) Issue false or misleading statements.
 - (ii) Allow others to use their name, qualifications, address or photograph in connection with the distribution to the public of any medical product or the provision of their professional services for the purposes of obtaining personal or professional advantage.
 - (iii) Canvas directly for patients.
 - (iv) Misconduct themselves with a patient in a sexual or other physical manner.
 - (v) Attend a patient while their judgement is impaired by alcohol or drugs.
 - (vi) Fraudulently misrepresent to a patient the duties they have performed with the intent to obtain additional payments.
- 5**
- (i) Sonographers who are required to perform intracavity scanning, including transvaginal and transrectal scanning, should do so, only after advising the patient fully of the intended procedure and obtaining consent (preferably written) from the patient or their carer.
 - (ii) Intracavity examinations should only be performed when specifically requested or deemed appropriate in accordance with established departmental protocols agreed upon by both the sonographer and the employer.
 - (iii) Sonographers should perform intracavity ultrasound examinations only after having received adequate training.
 - (iv) Sonographers should ensure that intracavity ultrasound examinations are performed only with equipment that has been specifically designed for these procedures.
 - (v) When a sonographer performs an intracavity ultrasound examination, the presence of a third party is recommended.
 - (vi) Sonographers should apply recommended equipment cleansing, covering and sterilisation procedures before and after the examination.

