

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH
INFORMATION BRIEFING NOTE**

Cliff #

**PREPARED FOR: Dr. Robert Halpenny, Chair, Medical Services Commission -
FOR INFORMATION**

TITLE: Community Imaging Clinics – COVID-19 Impacts and Requests

**PURPOSE: To summarize issues and establish principles concerning Community
Imaging Clinics' requests related to impacts of COVID-19 response.**

BACKGROUND:

On March 19, 2020, further to the guidance from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), the Ministry of Health sent a letter directing all health authorities to move to a phase two outbreak response to COVID-19 for medical imaging, limiting exams to only those categorized as emergent or urgent.

Further to the direction sent to health authorities, the PHO, and the B.C. College of Physician and Surgeons (the College), asked physicians who work in the community to limit care to those patients who need essential urgent and emergency services, and where appropriate, to provide care by way of telephone or video technology. All services involving direct physical contact with patients should be reduced to minimal levels. These two sets of direction were provided to limit the spread of COVID-19 in communities and across the province.

As services are now resuming as of mid-May, both health authorities and Community Imaging Clinics (CICs) are working to address the backlog of imaging exams. The Ministry is working with health authorities to quantify their backlog but understands it to be different according to the modality. For the Lower Mainland alone, it was reported to be 58,000 postponed images for all modalities as a result of COVID-19 response. The Ministry does not have data on CIC backlogs.

However, services are not at 100% operational capacity at this time due to the implementation of Infection and Preventative Control (IPC) protocols. Safety protocols such as physical distancing requirements and increased time for cleaning and disinfecting equipment has resulted in up to a 20% reduction in patient throughput.

As such, it is anticipated that some facilities will seek methods to increase patient flow and revenue through facility and capacity expansion. Additionally, some facilities may request to provide a wider suite of diagnostic services than they are currently approved to bill the Medical Services Plan. These, both, would require approval by the Advisory Committee of Diagnostic Facilities (ACDF) and may include requests for exceptions to current policy.

DISCUSSION:

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Regulation states that a facility application for expansion cannot be approved without first establishing sufficient medical need and reasonable utilization of existing facilities. An application for radiology expansion, be it a physical location or additional machines, can be made at anytime. s.13

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Applications for diagnostic ultrasound remain under moratorium due to a lack of sonographers. s.13

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ADVICE:

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¹ Under the same temporary approvals as current CICs in non-cardiac Doppler pilot, recently extended to December 31, 2021. Include requirement for clinical placement to the degree possible and needed. Recommendations concerning CIC non-cardiac Doppler approval, including pre-requisites, will come forward in fall 2021.