

February 9, 2011

URGENT NOTICE TO ONTARIO RADIOLOGISTS

MOH IS PREPARING TO GLOBALISE ALL TECHNICAL FEES

The OAR and Section have just learned that the Ministry of Health is planning to globalise all technical fees in Ontario hospitals effective April 1, 2011. We have been told they plan to globalise all T fees in IHFs on April 1, 2012.

The OAR participated in an OMA conference call on Monday night arranged to brief all Sections about this development. Many questions were raised and strong expressions of concern noted in the call. The OMA stated the government unilaterally made this decision and is currently in discussions with the OHA. The OMA said it did not have the information to answer the many questions raised in the teleconference and that it would be an observer in the transitional review committee.

This is a major disaster for patient care in Ontario. In less than two months, half of the diagnostic technical fee activity in Ontario will be transformed with no public or stakeholder consultation. The complete lack of detail about how it will be implemented indicates that the MOH is making a broad decision for economic reasons with little to no regard for patient care implications and access to the health care system. This secret decision was made even though a global T fee option was rejected by MOH staff as part of a recent Diagnostic Services committee review.

The OAR Board and Section executive arranged a teleconference last night to discuss a plan of action. There was widespread agreement that this decision would have a major negative impact on the delivery of all diagnostic services and on patients and their referring physicians, who are depending on access to key diagnostic exams of all kinds. There was much discussion about the serious implications it would have on IHFs. A strategy on the needs of IHFs is also being developed.

Proposed Interim Actions

Contact Your Hospital Management and Board

Because this is being implemented in hospitals first, radiologists working in hospitals should immediately contact their CEO, VP Imaging, and the Hospital Board Chair to inform them and to indicate the serious patient care issues this will cause:

Some of the key questions and points to raise are:

1. Are you aware of what impact a globalised T fee will have on patient access for a wide range of all diagnostic exams (DI, cardiac, pulmonary, etc.)?
2. Ask specific questions related to your DI program such as 'do they know how this will impact the delivery of critical diagnostic services for such as womens health, cancer and osteoporosis patients, etc.?'

3. How will the hospital be able to meet high population growth needs, an aging population, or small town/rural needs, etc.?
4. How will it support any expanded or introduced medical program at the hospital that is dependent on DI examinations?
5. Are they aware this will result in wait lists for commonly ordered exams?
6. Do they agree that the OHA should be negotiating on their behalf with the MOH on an issue when so many of the details are unknown that will have an immediate impact on the hospital's operating plan?
7. What impact will this have on staffing, purchasing new equipment, hours of operation, and exacerbating existing local service delivery problems?

Contact other T Fee Billing Physicians

Speak to other T fee billing specialties at your hospital to inform them of this development and the impact it will have on their services. Get them to also contact senior hospital and board representatives to ask the same and other questions related to their specialty.

OAR Contact with other T Fee Specialty Organisations to Raise Concerns

The OAR has already initiated discussions with some of the key specialties that will be affected by this decision. It will work to develop strategies that can be jointly and individually deployed to communicate the implications of this decision on patient care delivery and access.

Call your Local MPP to Arrange a Constituency Appointment

1. Call your local MPP's office and arrange an appointment to ask if they are aware of this government decision and the implications to patient care at their local DI clinics and hospital(s).
2. More than one member of a group should go.
3. Advise the OAR office of your meeting so that a hand-out can be provided to you.
4. Seek out political candidates running in the riding in the October 2011 provincial election to obtain their support and commitment to call the Premier and Minister of Health.

OAR Emergency Members' Meeting

Holding an emergency meeting of members was discussed. It was concluded that we should schedule it once more facts are known about this decision. We will be advising you shortly and sending out more information as it arises.

Chiefs' Teleconference

The OAR will be holding a Chiefs' teleconference as an interim measure to exchange information. A notice will be sent out shortly.

Local Radiologist Actions

Provide any feedback you receive from your hospital contacts so we can communicate a more informed understanding to all members across Ontario.

Identify any other key questions you feel are relevant or ones that strike a chord with administrators. Advise the OAR office of these issues so they can be shared with all radiologists.