

Special Article - COVID-19

Infection Control Lessons in Radiology Departments During COVID-19

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Received: May 11, 2020; **Accepted:** May 13, 2020;**Published:** May 20, 2020

Short Commentary

Across the world, radiologists have benefited from the considerable volume of literature on the imaging appearances of COVID-19 pneumonia that has emerged from high-incidence centers of China, and spread globally across continents.

In the latest online publications of European Radiology, Gutzeit et al. [1], Deng et al. [2] and Politi et al. [3] have produced guidance on the critically important subject of infection control in radiology departments. The guidance covers areas like personal protective equipment, cleaning protocols, disinfection procedures and tips, with waste disposal. All three articles stress the importance of staff training as well as the need for identifying key personnel with responsibilities for infection control specifically within the radiology department. The authors also emphasize the need for establishing “clean” sanitized, and “infected” zones in hospitals, including separate CT scanners with dedicated transfer routes for patients with confirmed COVID-19 pneumonia. This may be challenging logistically for some institutions, hospitals, and practices. Scanning consecutive patients with COVID-19 pneumonia in batches, within pre-specified timeslots, may be a suitable alternative approach. Some aspects of the guidance will not be readily transferrable to all institutions and countries, such as the recommendation for dedicated isolation and observation wards for clinical staff, following work in high COVID-19 intensity wards.

Another important aspect to consider, which is not covered in so much detail, is developing protocols for patient transfer to CT scanners, in particular from ICU units, including for example specific guidance for radiographic and ICU staff during the scanning process. Nevertheless, these articles, in conjunction with other existing literature [4], will be instructive for readers and practices looking to develop or refine local radiology-specific infection control guidelines.

References

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