



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
POLICY COMMUNIQUÉ

COMMUNIQUÉ

TO: Health Authorities

TRANSMITTAL DATE: September 2013

COMMUNIQUÉ NUMBER: 2013-14

CLIFF NUMBER: 990686

SUBJECT: Acquisition and use of 3.0 Tesla Magnetic Resonance Imaging (3T MRI) for publicly funded clinical exams

DETAILS: Reference Documents:
2013-13 Policy Communiqué: The Health Technology Review: Evaluation and Assessment process for Non-Drug Technologies

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

MINISTRY CONTACT: Director, Diagnostic Imaging, Health Authorities Division
Director, Business Transformation, Planning and Innovation

Stephen Brown
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Health

BACKGROUND

The British Columbia Health Technology Review process was established by Leadership Council to provide evidence informed recommendations about the public provision of non-drug health technologies that will contribute to maintaining and improving the health and well-being of British Columbians and provide value for money. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting out the terms of cooperation, agreement and expectations for a provincial non-drug health technology assessment process was signed by health authority Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and the Deputy Minister of Health in November 2011. Further information about the Health Technology Review may be found at: www.health.gov.bc.ca/htr/.

As part of this health technology review process, a business case for the clinical use of 3.0 Tesla Magnetic Resonance Imaging (3T MRI) technology in BC was submitted to, and reviewed by, the BC Health Technology Assessment Committee (the Committee) on May 3, 2013. The Committee's findings and recommendations were presented to Leadership Council. This policy is based on the Leadership Council decisions.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to ensure that investment in, and use of, 3T MRI technology is clinically and cost effective and maximizes health benefits for British Columbians.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and all regional health authorities in British Columbia, including affiliated denominational facilities.

POLICY

1. Given that the incremental clinical effectiveness of the 3.0 over the 1.5 T MRI is not strong, there is no compelling reason for health authorities to consider purchasing a new 3.0 T MRI until a replacement system is needed or an expansion of MRI services is required. However:
 - The next logical MRI replacement in the Lower Mainland should be a 3.0 T MRI.
 - The 3.0 T MRI may be considered in any health authority when a 1.5 T MRI system needs to be replaced.
2. Use of the 3.0T MRI is supported for the following clinical indications: epilepsy, brain tumours, stroke, and musculoskeletal conditions. These indications may be updated from time to time should new evidence arise.
3. 3T MRI systems, when installed, shall be available as a provincial service so that British Columbians in all regions may benefit, rather than being available only to the residents of the local health authority.
4. Priority patients from around the province with these clinical indications are to be streamed to the 3.0T MRI (once available), following a formal process to be developed by the provincial Medical Imaging Advisory Committee.
5. The inclusion of the 3.0 T MRI in the indicative design for the BC Children's Hospital is supported because of its advantages for imaging children.

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is effective immediately. Health authorities must obtain Ministry of Health approval through the Capital Services Branch prior to making any commitments to purchase a 3T MRI system. Health Authorities may consider purchasing a new 3.0T MRI under the following conditions:

- a replacement system is needed (i.e. a health authority's existing 1.5T MRI has reached the end of its useful life and the cost of additional investment to keep it operational is no longer warranted, as demonstrated by financial and operational analysis).
- an expansion of MRI services is required and approved by the Ministry as part of an approved capital project plan and/or approved expansion of services.
- the total cost of ownership for the 3T MRI and 1.5T MRI over the anticipated lifespan of the equipment is comparable;
- the enhanced diagnostic capacity of 3T MRI technology will support academic and clinical programs, such as, but not necessarily limited to, BC Children's Hospital.

The provincial Medical Imaging Advisory Committee shall establish a 3T MRI working group with a mandate to develop a process for maintaining an evidence-based list of approved clinical indications for 3T MRI exams and for streaming priority patients to the appropriate 3T MRI site. When established, health authorities will follow the working group's approved process for streaming priority patients.

REVIEW

Should new evidence become available regarding 3T MRI technology, the technology may be eligible to re-enter the health technology review process. This policy will be reviewed by the Ministry of Health, in consultation with health authorities, no later than September 30, 2016.