THE CAR’S STRATEGIC COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – 2012

The profession of radiology is facing challenges given the overall mounting pressures on the Canadian healthcare system. It is therefore vital that the national radiology association seize the opportunity to focus on priorities that will support the provision of optimal and sustainable medical imaging care for all Canadians through a profession that is committed to the highest quality of care possible.

In order to best position the Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR) to fulfill this role, the CAR undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process in 2011 to set the direction for the organization for the next five years (2012-2016). It included consultation with CAR members and the Canadian radiologist community at large, as well as with provincial, national and international radiology groups, related healthcare organizations, and government.

Through this process, the CAR identified a common theme amongst the various components of the plan that would enable the association to best serve its members as well as the general public; that theme is quality. As a result, the CAR has determined that it will, more specifically, be focusing on quality improvement (QI).

This focus will enhance the influence and effectiveness of the CAR as a national association and will enable it to:

- promote a culture of lifelong learning and quality improvement in radiology services
- improve the uptake and use of technology in radiology services, and increase the credibility of approaches used in clinical practice
- bring together stakeholders to identify system-wide initiatives leading to improvement at the individual, organizational and system levels, as well as increased patient safety and enhanced patient experience.

CAR Goals, Objectives and 2012 Activities

With the theme of quality improvement in mind, the CAR has adopted four overall goals for the association based around the areas of:

1. Quality Assurance and Patient Safety
2. Advocacy
3. Membership Engagement
4. Resilience

Within each of the goals, the CAR has set clearly defined objectives which are built on the precept of a culture of quality improvement. This culture must flow through all levels of healthcare: the individual physician, the facility, and the system through which care is provided. The activities of the CAR are meant to impact, to some degree, all of these levels of radiology service, with the ultimate goal achieving optimal patient care.

The following pages highlight the goals and objectives that will guide the CAR over the 2012-2016 period, as well as many of the specific activities being undertaken in 2012 to meet those goals and objectives.
1. Quality Assurance and Patient Safety

**Goal: The CAR will be recognized as the leader in setting standards and defining the quality agenda for diagnostic imaging in Canada. By facilitating the implementation of those standards, it hopes to improve the quality of patient care.**

With the challenges and opportunities facing the practice of radiology in Canada, and the competing demands on the healthcare system, the CAR will continue to focus on quality assurance and patient safety. It will do so by making its quality initiatives available, as well as establishing a greater presence as a leader in quality improvement for radiology and radiologists across Canada.

**Objective: Promote lifelong learning and a culture of quality improvement in radiology services**

The foundation of safe and quality care is the knowledge that radiologists acquire through both medical education and the continuing professional development they pursue throughout their career. That’s why the CAR contributes to education and lifelong learning in a number of important ways. In 2012, in addition to the educational programming highlighted later in this document, the CAR will continue to promote lifelong learning and a culture of quality improvement in radiology services in the following ways:

- The CAR will provide radiologists with tools and resources to improve the quality of radiology services across Canada.
- As a national association, the CAR is well-positioned to facilitate national peer-led, developmental systems of feedback for radiologists and facilities. Activities contributing towards this initiative include the ongoing operation of its Mammography Accreditation Program (MAP), initiation of its Bone Mineral Densitometry Accreditation Program, and the provision of national guidance on peer review.
- The CAR will encourage effective management of radiology services by exploring the development of educational opportunities and other practice management products.
- The CAR will encourage radiologists to develop or enhance their leadership skills through mechanisms like leadership symposia. Only with strong radiologist involvement and leadership will radiologists improve their practice skills, their workplaces, the healthcare system and patient outcomes.

**Objective: Improve the uptake and appropriate use of technology in radiology**

Ensuring that all Canadian radiologists, regardless of where they practice, have access to imaging equipment that is safe and efficient, while maintaining a high level of appropriateness is essential in maintaining the utmost standard of healthcare throughout the country.

- Engaging with technology industry colleagues is a critical part of successfully advocating for the best in imaging care. Therefore, the CAR will continue to actively engage with industry to increase knowledge exchange and collaboration on mutual interests.
- To assist radiology services to discern the utility and applicability of technology, the CAR is spearheading the development of comprehensive guidance on the lifecycle of medical imaging technology in Canada.

**Objective: Increase the credibility of approaches used in clinical practice, using rigorous and structured processes**

In keeping with the CAR’s mission to promote safe, efficient and quality healthcare for Canadians, the association works closely with recognized experts and other professional bodies to develop national practice guidelines (also referred to as standards) and referral guidelines. The overall goal is to ensure the optimal procedure is done in the optimal way so that Canadians can benefit fully from medical imaging and from the skills and expertise of radiologists. With this in mind, initiatives of the CAR for 2012 include:

- The CAR will continue to develop, maintain and endorse evidence-informed practice guidelines. The CAR plans on completing at least four additional practice guidelines. Topics on the roster include breast imaging, ultrasound for pelvis, nuchal translucency and point of care, and an update on nephrogenic systemic fibrosis.
- Over the long-term, the CAR will also introduce systems for gathering input to inform the development and updating of practice and referral guidelines, and approaches used in clinical practice. Recognizing how resource-intensive guidelines development is, the CAR is also actively engaged with efforts to develop a national strategy for medical guidelines in Canada. It is crucial that...
specialists, and organizations representing them, have the capacity to guide specialty care.

- The CAR will continue its leadership role nationally and internationally on guidelines development and implementation. Specifically, the CAR continues as part of an international group focussed on guidelines development, bringing valuable lessons to the benefit of Canadian practice. In addition, the CAR will complete a Health Canada funded referral guidelines project in Manitoba that will afford important lessons on physician uptake of referral guidelines through computerized clinical decision support.

**Objective: Lead or collaborate on initiatives to increase patient safety and improve patient experience**

The CAR believes that patients and their families are at the centre of the healthcare team. In 2012, the CAR will undertake the following initiatives with an aim to impact patient safety and the patient experience:

- A thorough update of the CAR physician referral guidelines is currently underway. These will help guide those who refer patients to medical imaging services in requesting the most appropriate tests. Medical imaging is a critical component of the care that health professionals provide. However, mounting evidence demonstrates that between 10 and 20% of imaging studies are unnecessary. Any clinical intervention without clear purpose or patient benefit creates waste and negatively affects quality of care. Once the referral guidelines review has been completed, the CAR will distribute and market the appropriateness referral guidelines to CAR members and referrers in an effort to increase their usage.

- The CAR will provide services to address concerns with patient radiation exposure and specifically will produce a radiation dose primer and a radiation dose self-assessment questionnaire.

- Along with key partners, and as a member of the Wait Time Alliance, the CAR will contribute to the development and promotion of wait time benchmarks for medical imaging, beginning with an assessment of current diagnostic imaging wait times in Canada.

- On May 17, the CAR will participate in an inaugural Medical Imaging Day, a day dedicated to promoting knowledge and awareness of the radiology specialty. It will be launched with an event on Parliament Hill. The CAR is collaborating with five other organizations on the initiative - Canadian Organization of Medical Physicists (COMP), Canadian Interventional Radiology Association (CIRA), Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT), Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine (CANM), and Canadian Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (CSDMS).

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### 2. Advocacy

**Goal: The CAR will be recognized as the national voice of radiologists and advocate for the profession in Canada, within the profession and beyond.**

CAR members want the CAR to advocate on their behalf regarding issues that affect radiology practice and patient care. The CAR must, therefore, advocate within the profession of radiology, within medicine generally, with healthcare decision makers, and within its own membership. The timing is ripe to develop strong advocacy capability for the CAR to be the national voice of radiologists.

**Objective: Increase CAR capacity to engage in advocacy**

Over the course of 2012, the CAR will access advocacy expertise to develop achievable strategies which the CAR will in turn utilize when approaching government bodies.

In addition, the CAR will promote the important quality improvement directions highlighted in this document through various mechanisms and to varied audiences including members, stakeholder organizations, governments, and the general public.
3. Membership Engagement

Goal: The CAR will be recognized as a relevant and valuable national association by Canadian radiologists, providing unique programs and services.

The CAR exists because of its members. It is therefore committed to demonstrating the value of the CAR to its members and to increasing member engagement in the association. Focusing on initiatives that are best and uniquely provided by a national body provides focus for the CAR.

Objective: Engage in unique educational programming
- In 2012, the CAR celebrated the 75th Anniversary of its Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM). The meeting took place from April 26 to 29, 2012 at Le Centre Sheraton in Montreal, Quebec. The meeting has been growing in recent years as it focuses on offering a unique opportunity to network with Canadian colleagues and high quality relevant programming.
- The CAR will produce five issues of the CAR Journal, rather than the customary four, one of which will be a collaborative project involving the Canadian Interventional Radiologists Association (CIRA).

Objective: Improve communications with and for members
- The CAR will continue to be an accrediting agent of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. This role allows the CAR to uphold the highest standards of continuing professional development (CPD) within the profession of radiology and to foster that same high standard of education in other organizations offering radiology CPD.

4. Resilience

Goal: The CAR will be a resilient organization, able to respond to changing needs through a strong financial foundation and operations that are aligned with association best practices.

The CAR has undergone a transformation in its structure and operation in recent years. A commitment to realistic and focused operations enables the association to be a forward-thinking association ready for change and the future.

Objective: Continue to build financial and organizational resilience and stability
The CAR will achieve this by continuing the trend of increasing the CAR membership, and as importantly, encouraging members to actively engage in the CAR. It will also do so by operating a fiscally-sound organization.

Conclusion

In seeking to understand the current world in which Canadian radiology is practiced, Dr. James Fraser, President of the CAR, has said “Change for our profession will be inevitable. How we influence this change however remains uncertain, but with change also come opportunities.” The direction and plan that have been set forth by the CAR help to position it to influence change and seize opportunities that will benefit radiology in Canada. Through its commitment to quality improvement, the association will build a bright future for the radiology profession and ensure the best medical imaging care for Canadians.