

February 5, 2009

The Honorable Elizabeth Ritter
Co-Chair Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building
Room 3004
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Representative Ritter,

As Chairman of the Department of Diagnostic Imaging and Therapeutics at The University of Connecticut Health Center I would like to apologize for not being able to attend the public hearing today; however, I did want to share my thoughts regarding the licensure of the Radiologist Assistant Profession.

In the rapidly evolving, and increasingly expensive, field of radiology I am challenged on a daily basis to provide high quality patient care in a timely and cost effective fashion. As these demands on the radiology department increase, greater responsibilities are placed upon both the radiologist and the Radiologic Technologist. As a result, there has developed a need for a "radiologist extender" with specific knowledge and experience in the field of radiology. The American College of Radiology and the American Society of Radiologic Technologists in 2003 recognized these increasing demands and have concluded that an additional member of the radiologic team would be beneficial in providing the highest level of patient care. Consequently, the ACR and the ASRT developed a new physician extender, the Radiologist Assistant.

The role of the Radiologist Assistant is to perform patient assessment, procedures, provide patient education and initial review of diagnostic images. What makes the Radiologist Assistant an integral member of the radiologic team is their additional training as a Radiologic Technologist. Radiologist Assistants understand the use of and the appropriate safety precautions necessary when using ionizing radiation, and understand how to properly position patients for exams to obtain optimal diagnostic images. The added benefit of having an advanced level practitioner who is also a technologist is a tremendous asset to the radiology department.

Furthermore, both the Radiologist Assistant and the Radiologic Technologist must complete extensive education prior to becoming certified by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists. The education includes proper patient positioning, patient assessment, use of ionizing radiation and most importantly, proper radiation protection practices.

As a radiologist, I am in full support of the Radiologist Assistant profession in the State of Connecticut and the subsequent licensure of these professionals. Radiology is a unique subspecialty of medicine and we as radiologists need an advanced level practitioner who understands all the aspects of radiology. Radiologist Assistants will help the department provide the highest quality patient care while maintaining appropriate radiation safety for the patient and medical staff.

Sincerely,

Douglas Fellows, MD, FACR
Professor and Chair
University of Connecticut Health Center
Diagnostic Imaging & Therapeutics