

February 5, 2009

Ramon Gonzalez, MD
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Dear Dr. Gonzalez,

I am writing this letter in support of Radiology Assistants, and the Radiology Assistant Program at Quinnipiac University.

Nearly every medical and surgical specialty has employed physician extenders. However, the specialty of radiology has been remiss in its utilization of Radiology Assistants, typically using them in the interventional radiology setting instead. A common lament among radiologists utilizing residents has been that residents have often been disinterested in properly interviewing and working up patients, with the goal being simply to "get through the rotation."

In addition to this, traditional non-radiology PA's in nearly all cases have lacked the knowledge of fluoroscopy, computerized tomography, and magnetic resonance imaging which are essential to a well-functioning radiology department. Likewise, advancements in technology require a stronger knowledge base than that obtained by traditional radiology technologists. This has led to frequent situations where the radiologist is unnecessarily performing a great deal of non-interpretive work.

All of the above concerns point to the need for specifically-trained Radiology Assistants (RA's). The RA is capable of handling a variety of tasks including gathering and reviewing previous studies on scheduled patients; reviewing lab work, plain films, contrast studies, and CT and MR scans. The RA possesses the medical knowledge necessary to interview patients, perform injections, barium work, arthrograms and the like. These abilities on the part of the RA, combined with the availability of filmless technology, PACS (picture archiving and communication systems), and area networks, allow the radiologist to work off-site, where he or she can perform the critical interpretive duties. Meanwhile, the RA can supplement patient care needs within the acute care institution or office setting. In sum, while in the past radiology has been a leader in technology within the health care industry, it has been somewhat lacking in terms of advancing patient care. Development of this new breed of radiology assistant will certainly help to fill this void.

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As a practicing Interventional Radiologist of over 15 years and having worked with several Radiology Assistants and Radiology Assistant students, my experience with these physician extenders has been nothing short of extremely positive. Because of my positive experience with Radiology Assistants, I am enthusiastic to help in the training and promulgation of the Radiology Assistant Program at Quinnipiac University.

It is my firm belief that Radiology Assistants are superbly qualified Radiologist extenders and their participation in Radiology practices should be encouraged, doing what they are perfectly qualified to do, as a mid-level health care professional working under the supervision of a Radiologist.

Sincerely,

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