

UPDATE RE. RADIOLOGY SERVICES AT HDFT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC – 13th May 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The radiology department is working hard to restore and recover radiology services for all patients. We are still experiencing a significantly reduced capacity and as such this will take time.

We are limited by staffing, equipment availability and need to avoid crowding in our very small waiting areas. Currently most of our areas and equipment is shared with positive COVID-19 patients so we need to remain cautious.

We are still offering essential imaging and imaging for those referred to the appropriate 2ww pathway across all modalities. Waiting times will vary depending on demand. I anticipate the services will be restricted and waiting times higher than normal for the foreseeable future. We are working extremely hard to find new ways of working to minimise the disruptions and delays.

As always the duty radiologist remains available to discuss any urgent imaging requests or advice.

Summary of radiology services

PLAIN FILMS

The walk in service has been suspended (to prevent crowding). Please refer on ICE and we will contact the patient with an appointment.

Please refer only if essential, which is anticipated to be limited to Chest radiographs and trauma related studies.

Plans:

We are trying to increase capacity by opening facilities at Ripon, BMI Duchy, Alwoodley and possibly the Nightingale Hospital.

This will be used principally to support other services, for example orthopaedics , as considered appropriate for the services they are able to resume.

ULTRASOUND

We are currently providing urgent scanning for all urgent indications.

Antenatal scanning continues as normal.

Facilities at main site are limited for all other requests

Plans:

We are aiming to open up ultrasound lists off site at Ripon, BMI Duchy, Alwoodley and possibly Nightingale Hospital.

We will update when we have been able to agree use of these facilities and obtained / relocated required equipment.

CT SCANNING

We still only have one CT scanner which is required to concentrate on the most unwell of patients and is currently very busy with inpatients and COVID related diagnostics.

Urgent scanning, for example acutely unwell and those referred via a 2ww referral pathway (secondary care), continues.

Direct access for GPs is extremely limited and where possible referral to the appropriate 2ww or secondary pathway is advised.

Plans:

We have managed to secure a second, temporary, CT Scanner from NHS England. The installation and logistics will take some time to finalise. Hopefully this will be up and running to support outpatient activity within 2 months.

We are currently trying to access the CT facilities at the Nightingale Hospital in Harrogate. If granted access we would likely be able to use this significantly increase our outpatient scanning capacity within the next week or two.

MRI

Scanning of inpatient and urgent / 2ww cases is continuing.

To facilitate the additional CT scanner and release staff we have had to lose our mobile MRI unit.

Therefore capacity will remain significantly reduced for the foreseeable future.

Urgent secondary care referrals are being prioritised, although those with red flags, for example MRI heads are still available for direct GP access.

Plans:

We are hoping to relocate the mobile unit to the BMI Duchy and this will facilitate an increase capacity for ambulatory MRI imaging.

When/if this is agreed and set up an update will be released.

JOINT INJECTIONS

Not currently offered.

Advice from the British Society of Musculoskeletal radiology has recommended stopping these injections due to concerns that corticosteroid can impair immune response to a COVID-19 infection. Updated guidance is due to be released as evidence emerges and we will update as soon as possible.

Many thanks for your patience and ongoing help with patient triage during these difficult times

Dr Adam Culverwell

Clinical Lead for Radiology