



Policy on Referral for Diagnostic Imaging Services

Version control

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Responsible Manager: Director for District Health Services

Approved by the Head of *G. Matladpane*

Department: G. MATLADPANE Date: 18-09-2013

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Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

Health Service Excellence for All

Mission

Working together, we are committed to provide quality health care services. We will promote a healthy society in which we care for one another and take responsibility for our own health. Our caring, multi-skilled professionals will integrate comprehensive services, using evidence-based care-strategies and partnerships to maximize efficiencies for the benefit of all.

Values

- Respect (towards colleagues and clients, rule of law and cultural diversity)
- Integrity (Honesty, Discipline, and Ethics)
- Excellence through effectiveness, efficiency, innovation and quality health care.
- Humanity (Caring Institution, Facility and Community)
- Empower our people

Policy Aim

1. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the consultation, referrals¹ or transfer of patients to other health care facilities/ health professionals² for diagnostic imaging³ services when deemed medically necessary by a doctor.

Policy Scope

2. This policy applies to all health professionals and patients of the Northern Cape Department of Health.

Policy Statement

3. It is the policy of the Northern Cape Department of Health that:
 - 3.1. The referral of patients for diagnostic imaging be formalised and regulated.
 - 3.1.1. The referring practitioner must have examined the patient and noticed a need to refer the patient for diagnostic imaging; such information must be communicated to the specialist or consultant that the patient is referred to.
 - 3.1.2. The referral must be in writing on the appropriate x-ray forms and should be signed by a referring practitioner.
 - 3.1.3. The specialist or consultant to whom the patient is referred to must have received the referral letter on or prior to the occasion of the professional service required/ to which the referral relates.
 - 3.2. All health professionals entitled to refer patients for imaging procedures may request a diagnostic imaging service.

¹ Referrals means a request by a specialist, consultant physician for investigation, opinion, treatment and/ or management of a condition or problem of a patient for

² Health professionals refers to Medical Doctors, Allied Workers and Professional Nurses, Dentist and Chiropractor

³ Diagnostic imaging service refers to x-ray, computerized tomography scans, ultrasound scans, magnetic resonance imaging and nuclear scans)

3.3. The internal, external, public and private patients may be referred for diagnostic imaging.

3.4. Provision of Diagnostic Imaging

3.4.1. A diagnostic imaging service may be provided only by health professionals who are appropriately trained and registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) in Radiography or Radiology; such health professionals may operate x-ray equipment and perform examinations within their scope of practice.

3.4.2. The Radiographer / Radiologist must receive a signed and dated request x-ray form from the requesting practitioner who deemed the service necessary to assist with the correct diagnose.

3.5. Tertiary, Regional, District Hospitals and Community Health Centres (CHC) render Diagnostic Imaging Services.

3.6. Referrals pathways

3.6.1. Primary Health Care refers to CHC

3.6.2. CHC refers to District Hospitals

3.6.3. District Hospital refers to Regional or Tertiary Hospitals

3.6.4. Patients from Regional hospital and District hospital must be referred to specialised clinics at the tertiary hospital for examination before referring them to a specialist or consultant except emergency cases i.e. accidents

3.7. Health facilities render services according to the service package they offer.

3.7.1. Tertiary hospital offers MRI, CT, Fluoroscopy, Interventional radiography, general radiography, mammogram, dental and ultrasonography –Doppler.

3.7.2. Regional Hospital offers CT, Fluoroscopy, general radiography, mammogram, dental and ultrasonography-Doppler

3.7.3. District Hospitals offer general radiography, dental and ultrasonography.

3.7.4. CHC offers general radiography

3.8. Licensing of Health Facilities Undertaking Diagnostic Imaging Procedures

3.8.1. All health facilities equipment performing diagnostic imaging must be registered with the Department of Health, Radiation Control Directorate according to the Hazardous Substance Act No: 15 of 1973⁴.

3.8.2. All health facilities have to comply with the radiation protection, quality control and the licensing regulation.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4. The responsibilities are outlined as follows:-

4.1. The **Chief Executive Officers** and Hospital Managers must ensure that the radiation protection requirements are adhered to as stipulated in the Regulation of the Radiation Control⁵.

4.2. The **Deputy Director for Radiology** must:-

4.2.1. Conduct regular audits to assess the correct usage of protective clothing and the safety of patients during x-ray examination.

4.2.2. Provide reports to the district, hospital managers and the radiographer regarding the findings of assessment.

4.2.3. Advise hospital managers on radiation protection measures.

4.2.4. Conduct information sessions regarding the rights and safety of patients during x-ray examination.

4.2.5. Perform quality control on x-ray machines.

⁴ Hazardous Substance Act 15 of 1973 governs the safe use of medical x-ray imaging equipment

⁵ Regulation of Radiation Control

Review and Distribution

5. The Deputy Director for Radiology is the responsible manager for this policy and for ensuring it is reviewed and updated.
6. This policy will be reviewed after 3 year but no later than 5 years after the last publishing date. If necessary an updated version will be issued, if not a formal cover letter will be issued to supplement the cover of this Policy (identifying a revised publication date).
7. The Director for Policy & Planning will distribute updated versions to:
 - Member of the Executive Council for Health
 - Head of Department of Health
 - All Chief Directors, Directors and Deputy Directors (who will in turn distribute to their staff as appropriate.)

Acknowledgements and Sources

This policy draws upon the following legislation:

- The Hazardous Substance Act,1973 (Act No: 15 of 1973)
- The Control of Electronic Products Regulation Gazette No:3991
- International Commission on Radiological Protection
- The Radiological Protection and Safety in Medicine
- Medical, Dental and Supplementary Health Services Professions Act No: 56 of 1974 (Annexure 7)
- Code of Practice for Users of Medical X-ray equipment