Patient Advocacy in Radiographic Imaging: A Foundation of Ethical and Patient-Centered Care

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See The Patient, Not The Procedure

Radiographers work in a fast-paced environment where technical skill and efficiency are essential. However, every patient brings unique experiences, diagnoses, concerns, and needs to the imaging department.

Patient advocacy requires radiographers to look beyond the examination by protecting patients, educating them, listening to their concerns, and providing compassionate, patient-centered care.

What does advcocacy look like?

Communicate- ***Listen & Explain***

Educate- ***Prepare & Inform***

Respect- ***Dignity & Autonomy***

Protect- ***Apply ALARA***

High-quality imaging begins with high-quality patient care.

A Professional Responsibility

Standard Eleven of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists Practice Standards calls upon the radiographer to be an advocate for patient care.

Radiographers should anticipate and respond to the individual needs of each patient in their care, beginning with fundamental elements of patient advocacy.

Every patient deserves to feel:

Safe- ***Physical & Emotional Safety***
Respected- ***Dignity & Privacy***
Heard- ***Communication & Honesty***
Reassured- ***Education & Understanding***

Patient advocacy is not an additional task- it is an essential part of the care that we provide.

Advocacy Happens at Every Step

Before the Exam

1

Prepare & Verify

- Review your patient's history and previous imaging studies
- Verify the correct and appropriate exam to be performed
- Confirm the patient's identity with at least two identifiers
- Clarify any discrepancies with the patient or their provider

During the Exam

2

Communicate & Educate

- Introduce yourself and establish trust
- Explain the procedure in easy-to-understand terms
- Answer the patient's questions honestly
- Encourage the patient to communicate discomfort

Protect the Patient

3

Safety & Dignity

- Apply ALARA
- Protect privacy, maintain patient dignity, and encourage autonomy
- Use precise positioning to minimize repeat exposures
- Select appropriate technique settings for the patient and exam

Advocate

4

Listen & Speak Up

- Take patient concerns seriously
- Recognize when something isn't right and pause if necessary
- Clarify questionable orders before proceeding
- Advocate for the patient's needs

Research References

- ***Registered nurses' description of patient advocacy in the clinical setting*--Nsiah, C., Siakwa, M., & Ninnoni, J. P. K.**
- ***Standard of Ethics*--American Registry of Radiologic Technologists**
- ***ASRT practice standards for medical imaging and radiation therapy*--American Society of Radiologic Technologists**
- ***About Sexual Violence*--Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
- ***Trauma-Informed Health Care*--U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**
- ***Cost of Low-Value Imaging Worldwide*--Kjelle, E., Andersen, E. R., Soril, L. J. J. van Bodegom-Vos, L., & Hofmann, B.**

One in Three Women

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three women will experience sexual violence during their lifetime. Trauma can influence how patients experience healthcare. Trauma-informed care is especially important in women's imaging, where intimate positioning and physical contact may increase feelings of vulnerability. Radiographers can promote trust, safety, and patient autonomy throughout the imaging experience.

Trauma-informed healthcare practices

Explain- ***Do you have any questions?***

Consent- ***Do you want to proceed?***

Communicate- ***Do you feel safe?***

Empower- ***Do you need to pause or stop?***

Foster trust, safety, and autonomy.

When Imaging Doesn't Add Value

3.6 BILLION ***studies annually***

93% ***involve ionizing radiation***

20–50% ***considered to be low-value***

Low-value imaging may expose patients to risk without providing meaningful benefit to their health outcome.

Protect patients from low-value imaging

Verify- Is this exam appropriate?

Identify- Correct patient, part, and exam?

Communicate- Clarify before exposing.

Prevent- Avoid unnecessary radiation.

Protect- Always apply ALARA.

Advocacy begins before exposure.