

MEMO

Date: August 25, 2021

To: All Diagnostic Imaging Directors & Managers

From: John French, Executive Director, Diagnostic Imaging, Shared Health

cc: Dr. Marco Essig, Provincial Specialty Lead, Diagnostic Imaging, Shared Health
Dr. Ingvar Fife, Head of Radiation Protection & Imaging Physics, Medical Physics, CancerCare Manitoba

Re: **Patient Shielding Practice Change**

As many of you are aware, professional bodies around the world, including the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT) and Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR), have released position statements advocating for the discontinuation of gonadal and fetal shielding for patients during x-ray examinations. Shared Health is aware of these recommendations, and in late 2020, a multidisciplinary working group was convened to evaluate potential practice changes in Manitoba. The group includes MRT's, clinical educators, radiologists, medical physicists, and managers.

After careful review of the available evidence, including position statements from national and international professional and scientific bodies, Shared Health has decided to adopt this change in practice for patient shielding. Going forward, we will no longer be routinely using shielding on patients. However, shielding will remain in DI departments and must still be available for use if requested by the patient or caregiver.

We understand that many of us will find this transition challenging, particularly in the pediatric imaging community. This significant change in practice may seem sudden, as many of us have been diligently using patient shielding for years, if not decades. We will support technologists, stakeholders and the general public through this transition with the best information available.

Our scientific understanding of the risks associated with the low levels of radiation used in diagnostic imaging has evolved, changing the way we look at routine shielding practices. For example, there has been no evidence of heritable genetic effects in humans from radiation exposure at diagnostic levels. Modern X-ray imaging systems also require far less radiation to produce diagnostic images than the systems in use at the time that patient shielding became



standard practice. Shared Health recognizes that this scientific evidence has been accepted worldwide and adopted in many jurisdictions.

We, as medical radiation technologists, are committed to uphold best practice based on current scientific findings. It will be our responsibility to educate patients and the public about this change in practice. Shared Health is equally committed to supporting this process by providing all necessary educational material and resources.

This change in practice will be uniformly implemented across the province on October 4, 2021. Shielding practice must be consistent across all Shared Health sites to maintain the high degree of trust and confidence that our patients and the public place in us. Prior to implementation, a series of information sessions will provide Diagnostic Imaging staff and stakeholders with opportunities to learn about the rationale for this change and ask questions. The Shared Health website will also be updated with information on this practice change, including links to relevant documents from professional and scientific organizations. This information will be accessible to both staff and the public. External stakeholders will also be notified of this change in Shared Health practice.

You can expect to receive communications about the upcoming information sessions in the following weeks. If you have questions, please explore the material on the Shared Health website: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/services/diagnostic/patient-shielding/>