

Improving Timely Access to Radiology for Nova Scotians

Access to necessary health care is a fundamental principle for Nova Scotians and is of critical importance for government, health care professionals and the public. Early detection, management, and intervention in many areas of neuromusculoskeletal health is a necessary component to delivering health care to patients suffering from acute trauma and/or increasing disability or chronic pain. Timely access to testing allows for proper diagnosis and facilitates proper treatment.

Key Points:

- As of July 2022, there are approximately 100,000 Nova Scotians who do not have a family doctor/primary care provider.
- Neuromusculoskeletal conditions represent a high proportion of visits to emergency rooms. They also represent a high proportion of physician visits overall, which is particularly concerning when there are fewer physicians available. This number is estimated to be, at least, 22-25% or almost 1 in 4 visits.
- In addition to the immediate need of Nova Scotians to access appropriate radiology, delays in diagnosis and treatment can lead to increased incidence of chronic pain downstream.
- The annual per-person direct medical cost for a patient with chronic pain was more than 50% higher than a comparable patient without chronic pain.”
- Preventing and managing chronic pain is a key aspect of reducing the opioid crisis in Canada and Nova Scotia.
- Other Canadian provinces (Ontario, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, some areas of BC, pending PEI) do allow chiropractors to refer directly to hospitals and provincial facilities for basic radiographic studies.
- In some areas of the province (HRM), chiropractic patients can be directly referral for basic radiological studies at local facilities and in other areas this requires an additional request and delay in access for referral via a patient’s family doctor/most responsible health care provider (MRHCP). For those without a family doctor, this request can only be accessed via walk-in or emergency physician referral.
- Chiropractors in Nova Scotia are willing to provide this request of radiology service at no additional cost to facilitate timely and appropriate patient care.
- As direct access clinicians providing care to Nova Scotians across the Province of Nova Scotia, chiropractors are currently underutilized resources to aid in improving access to needed radiological studies for neuromusculoskeletal disorders.
- In a post-Covid effort to minimize exposure of patients to unnecessary public contact at multiple healthcare facilities, direct referral can eliminate unnecessary steps to access radiological services.