

Widespread use of teleradiology services could be declining

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Researchers have found recent evidence that shows the growth of external, off-hours teleradiology services (EOTs) has slowed in recent years, despite a significant increase in the number of radiology practices using those services between 2003 and 2007, according to a study in the November issue of the *American Journal of Roentgenology*.

The data collected showed that the number of radiology practices using EOTs increased from 15 percent to 44 percent between 2003 and 2007. Patterns of use were generally as might be expected; however nonmetropolitan practices, which might be expected to have high odds of using EOTs, did not.

In spite of predictions that the market for EOTs will continue to expand, researchers commented on recent evidence that may suggest otherwise. "Data on the number of examinations performed taken from recent quarterly reports of the largest firm in the industry, Nighthawk Radiology Services, suggests slower growth," said Rebecca Lewis, lead author of the study. In addition, a survey of a convenience sample of radiology practice leaders, found extremely few were using teleradiology firms for daytime reads or subspecialty interpretations, although providing these services is a prominent expansion strategy of the industry. Also, a considerable number of practices that had been using teleradiology services EOTs were no longer doing so.

Authors concluded that the use of EOTs was widespread by 2007. However the use of EOTs could be on the decline. Further research is

needed to clarify future trends.

Source: American Roentgen Ray Society

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