

Majority of primary care physicians prefer delivering radiology test results to patients themselves

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According to a study in the February issue of the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*, primary care physicians prefer to deliver the results of radiology examinations themselves and feel medico-legally obligated by recommendations within radiology reports.

The [radiology](#) report is the primary means of communication between the [radiologist](#), the patient, and the patient care team and serves an important role in facilitating patient care, especially for [primary care](#) physicians in the outpatient setting.

"There is considerable interest in improving radiology reporting practices. However, as radiologists propose measures to improve reporting, it is wise to obtain an understanding of the needs and opinions of referring physicians, particularly primary care physicians, regarding these measures so that their feedback and ideas can be incorporated into any change in practice," said Andrew J. Gunn, MD, author of the study.

An [online survey](#) was distributed to 229 primary [care physicians](#) through an internal list server, and responses were collected confidentially.

There were 100 responses. The majority of respondents were satisfied with radiology reporting and recommendations in general. Ninety-five percent of respondents felt that ordering physicians should deliver the results of examinations. No respondents felt that radiologists should

deliver results directly to patients. In addition, 94 percent of respondents felt medico-legally obligated by recommendations made by radiologists within their reports. Twenty-three percent of respondents felt more medico-legally obligated if the recommendation is set apart from the clinical impression, while 58 percent of [respondents](#) felt less medico-legally obligated if qualifying language is added to the recommendation.

"Our study suggests [primary care physicians](#) prefer to deliver the results of examinations themselves and feel medico-legally obligated by recommendations within radiology reports, even though this seems to be influenced by the wording and location of the recommendations within reports. Radiologists should consider these factors when contemplating changes in reporting practices," said Gunn.

"Continuing improvements in radiology reporting practices are essential to the service that radiologists provide to patients and referring physicians. These improvements, however, should consider the preferences of both patients and referring physicians to optimize care. Future research, such as patient focus groups, patient satisfaction surveys, and surveying other medical specialties, is necessary to better delineate and understand these preferences," said Gunn.

Provided by American College of Radiology

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