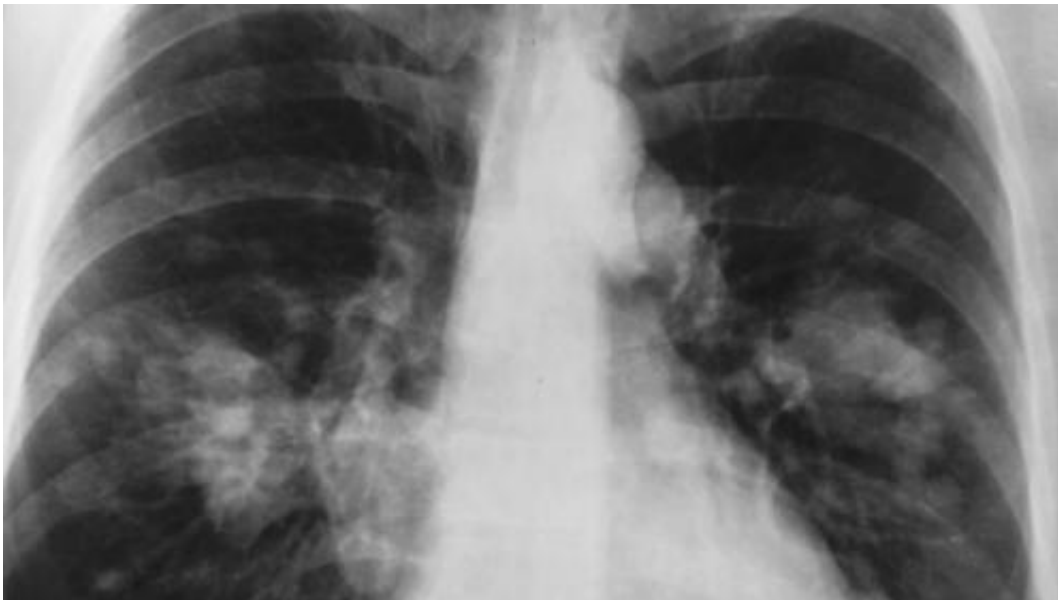


'Unacceptable' UK variation in waiting times for radiology results

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Credit: Wikimedia Commons

A 'chronic' shortage of radiologists is causing wide variation in waiting times for x-ray and scan results, experts claim.

The hold-ups can cause not only anxiety, but also delays to the diagnosis of cancer and other serious conditions.

The findings of the [survey](#), commissioned by Royal College of Radiologists (RCR), suggest that up to 300,000 patients are waiting a

month or more to get their x-ray results.

Around 6,000 more could be waiting for at least 30 days to hear the outcome of their CT or MRI scans.

The Royal College said the service needs to be improved to ensure people get the treatment they need as quickly as possible.

It wants more [radiologists](#) trained in the UK to put the country on a par with other European countries.

The UK has about 48 trained radiologists per million people, while France, Spain and Germany have 130, 112 and 92 respectively, it says.

It also says better use could be made of existing radiologists, for example by establishing networks that can serve larger areas of population.

Cancer Research UK's chief executive, Harpal Kumar, said the hold-ups were "unacceptable", and called for urgent action to improve the situation and ensure people aren't facing long, anxious waits for results.

"We know that in some other countries in Europe, scans are reported in as little as 24 hours. Timely diagnosis and prompt access to treatment for cancer, and other diseases, can make all the difference in improving survival," he said.

"Patients need the assurance that suspected cancer is taken seriously and is prioritised by the NHS," he added.

"A plan needs to be put in place urgently to train many more radiologists to deliver an improved service. We won't successfully tackle this problem unless we deal with workforce constraints head on."

President of the Royal College of Radiologists, Dr Giles Maskell, said the survey raised serious concerns for patients' safety.

"Although most of these x-rays and scans will not show serious abnormalities, some will show findings which would allow an expert to diagnose [cancer](#) or another serious condition at a stage at which it could be cured," he said, adding that the College was "wholly committed" to improving the quality of services for patients, and to working with NHS England and others to find the solutions.

The RCR survey looked at the waiting times for results at about a quarter of England's NHS radiology departments.

The survey identified 81137 X-rays, and 1697 CT and MRI scans which had waited more than 30 days for a radiologist's report.

The survey included a mix of all types of institutions, from large urban teaching hospitals to small rural hospitals.

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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