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To: To all GP Practices

Tel 028 95363305

Date: 2nd February 2022

Dear Colleagues

Northern Ireland Referral Guidance for Suspected Lung Cancer

Lung cancer can be challenging to diagnose even under normal circumstances, therefore it is more important than ever to be alert to the risk of suspected lung cancer in patients, with the added possibility of symptoms now being disguised by potential COVID-19 symptoms.

Recognising the extreme pressures that both primary and secondary care are managing and to optimise every patient's journey to a lung cancer diagnosis, we want to make sure that everyone is aware of the swiftest route to a red flag CXR report.

As you are aware the patient's diagnostic pathway is already significantly challenged with the impact of COVID-19 and changes in direct radiology access. **A CXR report is essential to the grading of your patients referral. An abnormal CXR that is suggestive of a lung cancer will lead to an accelerated CT scan pathway and appointment at the Lung cancer clinic for the patient. Those with clinical concerns and a normal CXR may still need a CT scan and this will be arranged on receipt of referral.**

The Modernising Radiology Clinical Network advice on the fastest route to suspected lung cancer CXR in your area is attached. All Radiology departments have confirmed that they will prioritise the CXR request when requested Red Flag with documentation that lung cancer is suspected.

We would like to remind you of the NICaN Red Flag suspected lung cancer guidelines.

Red Flag referral, patients with:

- persistent haemoptysis (in smokers or ex-smokers aged 40 years and older)
- a chest X-ray suggestive of lung cancer (including pleural effusion and slowly resolving consolidation)
- a normal chest X-ray where there is a high suspicion of lung cancer
- a history of asbestos exposure and recent onset of chest pain, shortness of breath or unexplained systemic symptoms where a chest X-ray indicates pleural effusion, pleural mass or any suspicious lung pathology.

Urgent chest X-ray (the report should be returned within 5 days for patients with any of the following:

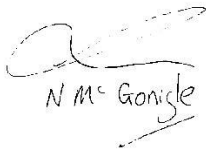
- haemoptysis
- unexplained or persistent (longer than 3 weeks):
 - chest and/or shoulder pain
 - dyspnoea
 - weight loss

- chest signs
- hoarseness
- finger clubbing
- cervical or supraclavicular lymphadenopathy
- cough
- features suggestive of metastasis from a lung cancer (for example, secondaries in the brain, bone, liver, skin)

Underlying chronic respiratory problems with unexplained changes in existing symptoms.

[GP Suspect Cancer Referral Guidance 25.06.21](#)

Yours sincerely



N M^c Gonigle

Mr Niall McGonigle

Consultant Thoracic Surgeon

NICaN Lung CRG Chair



GP ENTITLEMENT - IMAGING ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS NOV 2021

All requests for imaging should be made meet criteria outlined in **iRefer the online radiological investigation guidelines tool from RCR.**
<https://www.irefer.org.uk/guidelines>

All requests for imaging should meet **NICE NG59 guidance for low back pain and sciatica in over 16s.** <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng59>

Trust	Modality	Investigation	Current Method of Ordering	Approx Turn around time to Scan	Approx Turn Around time to Report	Comments
BHSCT	PLAIN FILM	All	CCG and Paper for all Sites. Sectra referrals accepted for MIH and MPH			Appointment Service. All Sites. Will fast track a CT scan following any suspicion of cancer on CXR.
BHSCT RBHSC	PLAIN FILM	All Paediatric	CCG and Paper for all Sites. Sectra referrals accepted			GP Access for Paediatric US and PF only. Cannot request CT or MRI
NHSCT	PLAIN FILM	Rapid Referral Service	Sectra Order Management/NIECR	Same day	Same day	Imaged and Reported Same Day. Inclusion And Exclusion Criteria Apply. See Attached
NHSCT	PLAIN FILM	All	Sectra Order Management/NIECR	Two weeks for routines. Red flag/urgent less than one week	Within 28 days	Appointment Service - All Sites. All Referrals Must Meet Criteria Outlined In iRefer
SEHSCT	PLAIN FILM	All	Paper referrals, some limited electronic referral	Two weeks for routines. Red flag/urgent less than one week	Within 28 days	Appointment Service - All Sites
SHSCT	PLAIN FILM	All Except Urgent CXR	Sectra Order Management/NIECR	15 weeks	20 days	Appointment Service - All Sites Except Craigavon Area Hospital
SHSCT	PLAIN FILM	Urgent CXR	Sectra Order Management/NIECR	Same Day	48 hours	Walk In Service - All Sites Except Craigavon Area Hospital
WHSCT	PLAIN FILM	All	electronic referrals	walk in service	up to 14 days	Walk In Service - Resumed All Sites Sept 21