



9 - Timely Interpretation of Emergency Department Radiologic Studies

(Adopted - April 2003)

The American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians (ACOEP) recognizes not all hospitals throughout the country have the ability to staff a radiologist on site twenty-four hours a day. However, as emergency departments are entities that provide for the community's needs at all hours, timely interpretations by radiologists are needed to compliment the services provided by the emergency medicine physician. In order to best provide for the community, use of modern technology, e.g., tele-radiology, should be available for periods when emergency consultation is needed with an "on-call" radiologist.

The needs of emergency departments for radiological services can be classified as emergent or urgent. Established standards for radiology interpretations for emergency department studies will help emergency physicians provide a better service to the community. We recommend that each institution develop guidelines for timely interpretations.

Emergent – studies that need to be acquired and interpreted by the on-call radiologist within a timely manner in order to provide concurrent care. That may include CT scans, MRI, US, or any study that requires emergent radiologic consultation in the opinion of the emergency medicine physician.

Urgent – Medical imaging studies which are not emergent by where radiologic overview interpretation should occur within twenty-four (24) hours.

Notification of any disagreements between the emergency department reading and the radiologist needs to be reported to the emergency medicine physician on duty, using an appropriate quality assurance mechanism to make appropriate timely decisions.