



australian diagnostic imaging association

PRESS RELEASE

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Functional imaging to transform our medical system

The way we diagnose and treat disease is going to be transformed over the next decade, as functional imaging becomes widespread across Australia.

And while the new technologies will deliver huge benefits to Australians, it will also pose considerable cost issues.

That's the prediction of the incoming President of the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA), Dr Christian Wriedt on International Day of Radiology, Friday 8 November.

"We're talking about a whole new generation of imaging technology," Dr Wriedt said. "Think about what has happened with mobile phones over the past few years.

"These newly developed imaging devices and techniques, which are rare today, are going to become the norm very quickly - and we need to be ready."

Today's common imaging procedures, like CT and MRI scans, provide information about the body's structure. The new technology - as the name suggests - provides real-time information about how the body is actually functioning.

"The difference is simply huge," Dr Wriedt said. "With functional imaging you can see how a particular organ is working at the molecular level, for example how your liver is metabolising fat. We can see not just where a cancerous tumour is, but we can see what it's doing. We can see, in real time, whether a particular drug is helping a patient's treatment."

As functional imaging becomes more widely available, doctors and patients are naturally going to want to access it because of its ability to greatly enhance diagnosis and treatment. Individually tailored treatments, available through the new technology will not only be more effective, they will reduce the requirement for costly interventions and hospitalisations.

"For joint disorders such as arthritis, Australia's productivity loss is estimated at \$4 billion each year and expenditure is expected to treble in the first three decades of this century. The Federal Government needs to embrace functional imaging to not only enable better outcomes for patients but to help ease the health expenditure burden," Dr Wriedt said.

The ADIA President-elect said forming productive relationships with the new Federal Government was a top priority.

Dr Wriedt also welcomed Federal Health Minister Peter Dutton's decision to examine the fledgling e-Health records system.

"While there are issues, I believe it's absolutely fundamental that Australia develops a secure on-line system which allows patients to store and access their health records," he said.

"Of course, any system needs to be able to incorporate medical images seamlessly, given the central role it now plays in the diagnosis and treatment of so many conditions."

Dr Wriedt said of all the medical fields, radiology probably had the greatest experience in electronically sending, storing and accessing information.

Called teleradiology, specialists have been transmitting images between sites across Australia for more than a decade to assist with patient care, and the Government should use that knowledge to progress the e-Health concept.

"It's only sensible to build on the platforms which are in place, rather than building a new edifice from the ground up," he said.

"With technology continually improving, radiology will have an ever more critical role in the Australian health system, but that system has to be improved so patients can gain the maximum benefit from medical imaging."

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