

Predatory Practices in Teleradiology: Fact or Fiction?

By Joe Moock | March 16, 2011

There's something on most teleradiology professionals' minds: a recent article titled "[Outsourcing to Teleradiology Companies: Bad for Radiology, Bad for Radiologists](#)," published by the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*.

The controversial article labels teleradiology as an industry fueled by predatory practices and the displacement of hospital contracts. It goes on to state that radiology groups outsourcing night and weekend call coverage are surrendering the majority of their primary responsibilities as specialty physicians, while contributing to the overall decline of the industry as a whole.

After reading, I thought it would be important to discuss the issues at hand.

As most know, teleradiology was created to serve as a complimentary, value-added service for facilities to help enhance patient care and provide relief to existing staff. Teleradiology was not intended to be influenced by predatory practices, Wall Street, and shareholder wealth. Although a reoccurring theme in this article suggests the opposite, it clearly does not apply to all providers.

Many teleradiology entities do not compete in any way with radiology groups and would not read for independent diagnostic testing facilities or for non-radiologist physicians.

When it comes to radiology physicians "surrendering their responsibilities," teleradiology providers understand this is not at all the case. High-quality teleradiology practices works seamlessly with on-site radiologists to ensure all responsibilities are met. A good provider also ensures physician-to-physician communication; teleradiologists are immediately available to discuss a case with the referring physician over the phone, and all critical results are called in by the interpreting radiologist. It's obvious this process assists with the radiology specialty and results in around-the-clock service.

It is evident the authors of this piece failed to recognize the many benefits teleradiology brings to the table. For those lacking extensively trained radiologists, teleradiologists are available to consult and read on cases to assist the group. Teleradiology practices also provide proven, cost-effective technologies and systems to remotely transmit and read images, streamline administrative tasks, and provide other efficiencies that shorten turnaround time and improve quality of care.

Most teleradiology providers are also willing to assist in any way possible, whether a practice needs to support off-site radiologists, centralize work lists, or obtain additional staffing or introductions to other groups to create synergies.

While some teleradiology services make a name for themselves through unprofessional and unethical practices, the majority of providers operate with radiologists and patients in mind. It is these true, customer-driven providers that can, and will, combat the negative influences in the industry by simply staying in tune with their hospital partners and with each other for continuous, value-added service.

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