

UK Cyber-Attack, Radiology Response



As hospitals in the UK get back to normal service following the recent cyber-attack, radiologists, healthcare IT staff and technologists are taking stock.

The Royal College of Radiologists, the British Institute of Radiology and the trade association, AXREM have issued media statements in response.

Dr Nicola Strickland, President of The Royal College of Radiologists, said:

"The Royal College of Radiologists would like to issue a heartfelt thank you to all the hardworking radiology and oncology teams and their IT colleagues who have worked against the odds. We are sure all affected radiology and oncology departments have been, and are continuing, to do everything they can to keep working to offer patients the services they need. We appreciate that the National Cyber Security Centre and NHS organisations are helping those affected to recover from the attack.

"Undoubtedly patients and doctors will be affected. There could well be a backlog if images and scan reports cannot be accessed as normal while hospitals get their IT systems back online. Patient appointments for cancer treatment may well be affected and planning for radiotherapy or chemotherapy treatment may be delayed. However, if system reinstatement is not done properly the impact on patients could be far worse in the long-term. We are confident that affected radiology and oncology departments will be doing all they can to both safeguard patient data and get systems back online as soon as possible."

The British Institute of Radiology issued a statement applauding the radiology and oncology teams who were faced with unprecedented challenges. PACS teams, radiologists, radiographers, registrars and I.T. teams worked through the nights and weekend to begin isolating damage, restoring systems and ensuring the safety of patients was not compromised.

Alexander Peck, Communications Lead for the BIR Clinical Intelligence and Informatics Special Interest Group and Chartered IT Professional said: "As the threat began to hit hospital after hospital throughout Friday morning, Radiology Managers and Clinical Directors had to make tough decisions in a short space of time. Whilst this attack affected each hospital individually, in many cases those who acted quickly, closing non-acute services to concentrate resources and swiftly disconnecting modalities from infected networks, suffered the least damage. An approach of isolation meant minimal short-term disruption whilst defences were put in place to detect, contain and eliminate the malware."

"Many in the wider media have asked why the NHS was so vulnerable. In reality it is simply not possible to constantly change or update software in the environments these systems operate in. High quality digital diagnostic equipment is now fully integrated into the hospital environment and is a key part of the clinical decision making process. As a result, the discussion on future prevention strategies is a top priority for PACS Teams and IT Departments."

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