A Primer on the National System for Incident Reporting – Radiation Treatment (NSIR-RT)

The National System for Incident Reporting – Radiation Treatment (NSIR-RT) is collaboration between the Canadian Partnership for Quality Radiotherapy (CPQR) and the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). The goals of this national central repository for radiation therapy incidents include: improve patient safety, improve operational processes, and identify systems vulnerabilities.

What can NSIR-RT do for us?

Entering your incidents (both near miss and those that reach the patient) into NSIR-RT will help build a database that can assist in identifying national trends in radiation treatment incidents. Want to know what safety barriers other centres have in place that are catching an incident before it affects a patient? NSIR-RT can help! Have a major incident that occurred at your centre that you want to share with others? NSIR-RT will help you do this anonymously!

As centres become more accustomed to entering all incident data, the system will help identify local incident trends using the analytics tools included in the system. If you want to learn more about a specific event then using the private communication tool will permit you to discuss and learn about incidents without revealing the identities of patients, health care providers or facilities.

My centre doesn’t have an electronic incident reporting system currently. Can we use NSIR-RT as our primary one?

Yes. While NSIR-RT’s unique strength is the creation of and access to a pool of data to support national incident learning, centres that wish to use this as their local incident reporting system are welcome to do so. NSIR-RT will allow you to input an incident in draft form and make modifications as you conduct your investigation. Once your investigation is complete you can submit it to the national database. The database will NOT however include fields to record patient identifiers beyond age and gender.

Is this going to take up a lot of my time?

No. CIHI has worked with centres to develop a transfer schema to facilitate an interface between NSIR and local incident reporting systems. If this is a route that your centre decides to investigate then this means that you can upload your incidents into NSIR-RT as often as you’d like.

If your centre would like to manually enter an incident, it should take less than five minutes to input a completed record. The data set will include approximately 26 data elements. Some will be required for each incident and some will be optional. Optional data elements are still important, but the information may not always be known for each incident. The data set also includes text fields that allow you to provide a narrative description of the event.
So talk to me about privacy and confidentiality.

Because we understand the importance of guaranteeing the privacy and confidentiality, not only of your patient records, but also of incident specifics, CPQR has partnered with CIHI on the development of this database. CIHI is the national leader in the development and maintenance of comprehensive and integrated health information. Its NSIR system has an established privacy and confidentiality process that has met the high standards set forth by Canadian hospitals and cancer centres. If you chose to enter an incident into the NSIR-RT system, you remain the owner of the data. Only you have access to each incident file in its entirety. Authorized individuals at other centres can access other centres de-identified data to assist with their own learning needs. All participants are required to sign an agreement that outlines their obligations around access to data, as well as its security, use and disclosure. Outside organizations, including CPQR, are required to apply for access to the data for research purposes and again, all key identifiers are removed prior to access being granted.

Sounds great – sign me up!

A community reviewed taxonomy including severity scales has been developed by CPQR and forms the base upon which CIHI will build the NSIR-RT database. In parallel to the development work being done by CIHI, CPQR and its Early Adopters Group will code mock incidents to help ensure inter-rater reliability. We will post regular progress updates on our website, www.cpqr.ca, but if you would like to make sure you’re kept abreast of the latest news related to NSIR-RT we can add you to our email list-serve.

If you want to know how to prepare your centre for NSIR-RT, or if you have any questions let us know!