

About the Clinical Radiology Patients' Liaison Group (CRPLG)

About the RCR

The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) sets and monitors the training and qualifications required for doctors who go on to become clinical radiologists and clinical oncologists; it also establishes working practices and standards. It represents the profession in the medical field and liaises with other Medical Colleges and the Department of Health. The work of the RCR is divided in two Faculties; namely clinical radiology (for diagnostic and interventional radiology) and clinical oncology (for non-surgical aspects of cancer treatment).

Clinical radiology is concerned primarily with diagnostic imaging services, such as computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and plain films (x-rays), and with certain interventional techniques. These procedures (and others) help to diagnose illnesses as soon as possible, and help to avoid the need for surgical intervention in numerous cases.

These are exciting times in the field of radiology with many improvements such as those arising from advances in technology. This includes the impact of digital technology leading to filmless hospitals and also the greater use of 'key hole' technology as the radiologist takes on many of the tasks, traditionally carried out by surgeons. These minimally invasive methods are used to treat diseases, for example, of the liver or of the arteries, or drainage of abscesses and fluid collections.

What is the CRPLG?

The Clinical Radiology Patients' Liaison Group (CRPLG) of The Royal College of Radiologists was established by the Faculty of Clinical Radiology in 1997. There are eight lay members, two clinical radiologists and one ex-officio member. Anyone who has relevant experience as either a patient or as a carer, or who has experience or skills relevant to the CRPLG's aims, can apply to become a lay member. All members are appointed for four years.

What does the CRPLG do?

The CRPLG exists to communicate the patient's perspective to the RCR so that the RCR's activities, and those of its members, are planned and carried out with an informed understanding of what patients need, want and feel.

The activities of the CRPLG are directed toward influencing the ways in which healthcare professionals provide diagnostic services and treatment and communicate with patients and their families. For instance, the CRPLG has surveys of radiology departments and published booklets for managers and staff on ways of making their departments more patient-friendly. The CRPLG have also assisted the RCR in designing and writing the content for the website www.goingfora.com. Designed as a patient information website, www.goingfora.com is intended to assist departments in providing clear and informative details to their patients.

Typical of our work is the advice given to the Health Protection Agency on the patient's perspective of the booklet on the safety of x-rays.

Also much of the practice in radiology is defined by a series of guidelines which are regularly updated and on which the lay members often contribute. Lay members also attend relevant sub-group meetings including the specialty training, standards and research groups. Medical matters of common interest are also considered by regular meetings of the PLGs of all the Royal Colleges under the auspices of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

We also lobby for change at government level – for instance, in promoting funding for PACS (picture archiving and communication systems) in hospitals to reduce the need for repeated investigations, and respond to government consultation papers on health and medical issues.

We do not become involved in individual cases or in local patient liaison groups.

Whom do we represent?

Members of the CRPLG do not act as representatives of organisations or of specific groups of people. They bring their individual experiences and their own views to the group to help improve radiology services and treatment for everyone.

What kind of people can become lay members?

Anyone who had been involved in using radiology services, as a patient or a carer, or who has experience relevant to the group's work, can apply. We welcome members of any age, sex or ethnic group wherever they live in the UK (travel expenses to meetings are paid). We do not normally appoint people with a recent background in healthcare as lay members, since this would alter the balance of the group.

It helps if you are a confident person who is at ease in meetings and not afraid to express your opinions. Experience of committee work might be helpful to you, but it is not necessary.

How much work is involved?

The CRPLG meets in London three times a year, and you be asked to work on other committees or sub-groups. There is some reading of RCR material and other relevant documents to be done between meetings and lay members share projects such as writing booklets with the medical members, each person being responsible for a small part. Lay members are also asked to comment on consultation papers from the government and other bodies on issues that will affect patients. No one is expected to take on more than they are comfortable with, but is important to have the time to take on these activities. It is not essential that you have access to email, but you will find it helpful if you do.

What documents has the CRPLG produced?

The CRPLG produced a booklet titled '*Making your Radiology Department more Patient Friendly*' which has been well received by departments in many hospitals. The Group has also prepared a range of patient information leaflets. We have produced ten leaflets on general radiological procedures, four on nuclear medicine and 16 with the British Society of Interventional Radiology. Work continues on covering more procedures in this range. The booklet and the leaflets can be downloaded from the RCR website at: www.rcr.ac.uk. The particular page on the website where the leaflets appear is: <http://www.rcr.ac.uk/content.aspx?PageID=323>.

Chair

Clinical Radiology Patients Liaison Group