

The Initial Impact of COVID-19 on Australasian Sonographers

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 saw a series of lockdowns in Australia and New Zealand, and the temporary suspension on non-urgent elective surgeries. There was a large drop in the number of diagnostic imaging services billed to Medicare in April and May 2020. Sonographers as frontline healthcare workers experienced the impact of COVID-19 in various ways. A qualitative and quantitative online survey of Australian and New Zealand Sonographers was conducted between the 8th of May 2020 and the 14th of June 2020, gathering 444 responses. Changes in work hours and the number and types of ultrasound examinations being performed were seen, with differences between the public and private sector. Many sonographers suffered a reduction in their work hours. Healthcare workers were required to limit community transmission of the virus as much as possible by limiting patient contact and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Adjustments to sonographic examination protocols including their duration and scheduling were seen to protect patients and staff. Cleaning requirements increased and access to PPE was poor with differences again between those working in public hospitals and private practices. Subsequently the wellbeing of sonographers was affected from the ability to cope, to feelings around the level of support from employers. Differences were seen amongst different demographic cohorts and between those working in the public hospital environment and those working in private practices. This talk presents the initial impact of COVID-19 on Australasian Sonographers.

Keywords: COVID-19, Impact, Sonographers, Australasian, Wellbeing, PPE

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