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Section of Diagnostic Imaging, AMA

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## Media Release

**Letter to Albertans from Dr. Rob Davies on behalf of Alberta's Radiologists RE: postponement of screening mammograms, and the status of other medical imaging tests.**

Dear Albertans:

Your Radiologists (specialized medical imaging doctors) provide this essential service to fellow Albertans in both AHS hospital sites and in our community clinics, with only four hundred or so actively practicing Radiologists in Alberta handling three million exams per year in hospitals and another four million in community clinics. Recent announcements from Government about cancelled contracts with these doctors have made some of our patients, and the twenty-five hundred or so employees of our community clinics understandably nervous.

As our hospitals prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic and shift their resources and focus, we want to reassure you that the outpatient services you rely on will continue to be available at the community clinic sites that you are already familiar with (see [www.getthewholepicture.ca](http://www.getthewholepicture.ca) for an interactive map). We know the Albertans we serve will continue to get sick, hurt, pregnant, experience pain, and need our help with diagnostic imaging and image-guided exams for things unrelated to COVID-19, and we intend to be there for you and for your doctor through this difficult time.

Community radiology clinics have also been playing an important role in clamping down on the pandemic itself – by simply having our booking departments and clinic reception areas open and talking to patients, with AHS

screening protocols implemented, we are helping to screen and educate thousands of patients per day for COVID-19 risks that may warrant further testing.

To help us slow the spread of COVID-19 further and 'flatten the curve', we are asking patients:

- If you have cough/cold/fever/flu symptoms, use the AHS online assessment tool before going to a health facility: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>
- Do not expect a chest x-ray or a CT scan of your chest if you are worried about COVID-19. The best test is a swab of your nose/throat.
- **If your imaging exam is for a screening mammogram, we are asking patients to delay their upcoming exams if possible until at least May 1<sup>st</sup> 2020**, as suggested by the Canadian Society of Breast Imaging and Canadian Association of Radiologists. While screening mammography itself is a safe and essential service that saves lives, a short pause in the service will contribute to social distancing and decreased health-care related exposures to COVID-19 at this critical time. We are extending the same advice to Automated Breast Ultrasound (ABUS) for screening, and to Bone Mineral Densitometry (BMD.)
- Patients and their doctors should consider whether any other non-urgent diagnostic imaging exams or procedures can be safely postponed until the health risks from the COVID-19 pandemic have passed.

Thank you for your understanding.

With best regards,

Dr. Robert Davies, MD, FRCP(C)  
President, Alberta Society of Radiologists  
President, Section of Diagnostic Imaging (AMA)

Media interested in more information or speaking with Dr. Davies are encouraged to contact:

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