

**SUNRISE HEALTH REGION**  
**RADIOLOGY REVIEW BACKGROUNDER**

**June 24, 2010**

The re-read of 68,360 general radiology, CT, mammography and ultrasound exams is now complete in Sunrise Health Region. Below is background provided to assist your understanding of the reasons for the re-read of these exams and the process followed.

- Radiologists

Radiology is highly specialized work and it takes many years of training. A radiologist is a medical physician whose job it is to read (interpret) complex film images and digital images (diagnostic images) that are produced by equipment such as X-ray machines, ultrasound, mammography and CT scanners. The equipment takes a picture and the radiologist says what he/she sees in the picture (exam).

The radiologist then provides their professional interpretation in a report to family physicians and other specialists. The report explains what the radiologist saw when he/she looked at the exam. Radiology reports are only one tool used to help physicians but, they are very important to successfully confirm diagnosis of illness and to create appropriate treatment plans.

- Radiologist Dr. Tsatsi had worked as a temporary locum in the Sunrise Health Region in the fall of 2004. Dr. Tsatsi began working full-time April 2005 and worked in the region until May 14, 2009.
- Before being granted privileges to work in Sunrise Health Region all physicians must be licensed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS). Their education credentials are reviewed, they must provide proof of insurance coverage and they must pass reference and criminal record checks. In the case of Dr. Tsatsi, this process had been followed in 2004 with no identified concern.
- On Wednesday May 13, 2009 Sunrise Health Region was informed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS) of competency concerns due to significant variations in the interpretation of diagnostic images by Dr. L. Darius Tsatsi.
- As a patient safety precaution, the Ministry of Health and Sunrise Health Region immediately committed the resources for a full re-read of all of Dr. Tsatsi's work in the health region. A press conference was held on May 20, 2009 to announce the review. The health region invited the College to participate in the press conference to help explain the type of work that radiologists do and the role of the College in licensure and quality assurance.

- The Sunrise Health Region review involved sending out patient radiology exams to be re-read by Royal College Certified radiologists outside of the health region. The patient associated with each exam was contacted and the second interpretation reports were sent to the patient's family physicians for follow-up, as needed, with their patient.
- Independent of the Sunrise Health Region review, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS) struck a competency committee. The Council of the CPSS convened a final competency hearing in January, 2010. Dr. Tsatsi is no longer licensed to practice radiology in Saskatchewan. Details on the College's Quality Assurance Program and competency hearings are available on the CPSS website [www.quadrant.net/cpss](http://www.quadrant.net/cpss)
- During an on-site inspection by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, the quality of the testing equipment and the work of the other diagnostic staff in Yorkton was found to be very good and not in question.
- The patient safety review was coordinated by Sunrise Health Region and was paid for by the Province of Saskatchewan. The re-read of all exams has taken just over a year to complete and will cost approximately 4 million dollars.
- To date, the compiling the information sent to be re-read, retrieval of files and sending of letters to physicians and patients resulted in more than 26,000 hours of staff time in Sunrise Health Region, over and above the staffing needed for day-to-day operations.
- All 24,990 of the patients whose exams were part of the review have been contacted, with the exception of those with no known mailing address. The health region will continue attempts to locate new addresses through July, 2010. Until the end of September 2010, persons who have moved can contact 1-877-854-4424 to find out if they had tests that were part of the review.
- Throughout the review the Sunrise Health Region maintained a toll-free telephone number which former patients could call to find out if their exams were part of the review (1-877-854-4424). Sunrise Health Region also has a Client Representative toll-free number staffed to assist persons with questions or concerns about services provided by the health region (1-800-505-9220). These telephone numbers were widely publicized during the review.
- A difference of interpretation was noted in 12,871 exams (18.8%). Of these 10,883 (15.92%) were substantially correct with minor discordances and 1,988 exams (2.91%) were considered to have the potential to affect patient care.

- A total of 85 Royal College Certified radiologists were granted the privileges needed to re-read the 68,360 exams. Most of this work was handled by a large group of radiologists in Alberta; however some were also read by a radiology group in Regina. The radiologists who re-read the mammography exams had additional certification from the Canadian Association of Radiologists which applies specifically to the reading of mammograms.
- Family physicians received the second interpretation and, when appropriate, reviewed the information with their patient. To provide the health region with some idea of follow-up with patients, physicians were asked to submit a one page report checking a box if there had been any clinical significance, if follow-up had been required, or if concerns had received previous attention. These responses are still coming in.
- To date, family physicians have reported that 432 of the new interpretations had clinical significance that was followed up with the patient or had received previous attention.
- The health region does not have any further information about specific cases. Patient care is private and physician/patient discussions are confidential.
- The Province of Saskatchewan has fully covered the cost of the review, close to 4 million dollars. The exact cost will not be known until all associated bills have been received. As of April 30, 2010, the amount was \$3.439 million.
- Sunrise Health Region is working internally and with provincial colleagues to apply the knowledge gained during the review so that concerns are caught more quickly and processes are improved to advance patient safety in Saskatchewan.
- The health region has relied in the past on the Diagnostic Imaging Quality Assurance program of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and will continue to cooperate with this process.
- The radiology department in Sunrise Health Region has started planning for an internal process of review to support our radiologists.
- Later this year Sunrise Health Region will implement the Radiology Information System (RIS) and Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS). These two new information transfer and storage systems improve the quality of radiology information storage and access. The PACS system also makes it easier to transfer to specialists the radiology exams required for patient care. These will be helpful tools as the health region continues to strengthen our quality assurance processes.

- We regret the anxiety that the radiology review caused for patients. The review has often been difficult for people. It sometimes resulted in patients and their families having to confront, or relive, health care issues they had thought were behind them. For this we are truly sorry.
- Sunrise Health Region wishes to thank the radiologists and physicians in the health region for their follow-up work with patients and for their dedication to patient care and safety.
- The radiology department and administration staff coordinated this massive review, putting together an effective process which proceeded with remarkably few problems. They shouldered this incredible responsibility and continued to maintain day-to-day services. Their effort was truly exceptional.
- The Ministry of Health has supplied resources and support to the health region throughout the review. We thank them for their leadership and commitment to patient safety.
- Sunrise Health Region wishes to thank the hundreds of people who have and continue to assist with this review and we thank the public for your understanding.