

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Healthcare workers cannot provide patients with the right care, at the right time

if healthcare workers are unable to seek and receive the right care at the right time themselves.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on Canadian health systems. One alarming effect has been the deteriorating mental health and wellbeing of healthcare professionals. The Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT), Sonography Canada (SC), and the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) are calling for immediate attention to this crisis before it deepens further and critically affects our healthcare system and the care Canadians receive.

We are at a time in history where ignoring the mental health of our healthcare professionals has become a crisis within an overworked and under-resourced healthcare system. This situation will only continue as the pandemic begins to calm and we start to address issues such as the large number of delayed procedures and the effects of increased safety protocols that are likely to remain.

- **Medical radiation technologists are expected** to address the urgent and increasing backlog of medical imaging, as well as support radiation therapy patients with more advanced disease, as a direct result of the pandemic. The chronic burden associated with high workload and increased patient demands has increased the potential for MRT burnout and vicarious trauma.
- **Diagnostic medical sonographers** are experiencing an increased demand for ultrasound examinations for patients with more urgent medical issues. Staffing shortages and pandemic-related safety guidelines mean that sonographers' ability to provide compassionate, hands-on patient care and in-depth examination may be compromised. These unrelenting pressures are leading to increased stress, emotional exhaustion and burnout among diagnostic medical sonographers.
- **Medical laboratory technologists and assistants are anticipated** to experience higher levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since higher levels of social support are a known protective factor against psychological distress, including anxiety and depression, CSMLS will continue to strongly advocate for the medical laboratory profession at federal, provincial, and territorial levels.

Ignoring the mental health of these and other healthcare workers is a perilous gamble for a system that is overworked and under-resourced.

Optimize the wellbeing of healthcare providers and patients will be taken care of too.

No single entity can address these challenges in isolation. Canada needs a coordinated approach involving professional associations, provincial regulators, all levels of government, and healthcare professionals themselves to change the culture of healthcare system.

Collaboratively, our organizations have been working on strategies to mitigate the mental health challenges of our members and embark on coordinated advocacy efforts. The National Survey on

Mental Health is one tool we are using to monitor the mental health of our professionals. Collectively, we are one of the few health professional groups to have gathered and analyzed data pertaining to mental health both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. To review each organization's mental health data, please see the respective pages for [CAMRT](#), [CSMLS](#), and Sonography Canada. The evidence has informed our strategies and this joint statement.

We believe that mental wellbeing should be treated equally to physical wellbeing. The stigma associated with mental health challenges continues to be a major barrier to healthcare workers accessing mental health services and supports. For years, this has been clearly identified as a problem, but there has been little concrete action taken.

Together, we seek a system that normalizes and prioritizes the mental health of healthcare workers and access to mental health services, and supports healthcare professionals by:

1. **Empowering** healthcare workers to advocate for their mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.
2. **Promoting** timely and appropriate mental health care and support for healthcare professionals who work directly and indirectly with patients.
3. **Advocating** for more mental health care services and to remove barriers for the uptake of those services.
4. **Monitoring** the mental health of those in our professions and welcoming others to join the conversation.
5. **Upholding** the [National Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#) to improve the work environment for both current and future generations of health care professionals.

While this call for action is meant to address the immediate concerns related to the pandemic, we also believe that much of what needs to be done will also improve our healthcare system as well as the mental health status of our healthcare workers and the care our patients receive.

Irving Gold, CEO Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists	Susan Clarke, Executive Director Sonography Canada	Christine Nielsen, CEO Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science
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ABOUT:

CAMRT: Established in 1942, the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT) is the national professional association and certifying body for radiological, nuclear medicine and magnetic resonance imaging technologists and radiation therapists. Recognized at home and internationally as a leading advocate for the profession of medical radiation technology, the CAMRT is an authoritative voice on the critical issues that affect its members and their practice. The CAMRT has successfully partnered with a number of government initiatives and agencies in the past to work towards a better healthcare system for Canadians. Find out more at camrt.ca or contact Christopher Topham, Director of Advocacy and Communications (ctopham@camrt.ca).

SC: Sonography Canada is the credentialing body and national professional association for diagnostic medical sonographers in Canada. Our entry-to-practice examinations, updated National Competency Profiles and Professional Practice Guidelines continue to provide the framework that enables the profession of sonography to grow, flourish and advance. As an organization, Sonography Canada's priorities are to support its members through entry-to-practice and enhanced credentialing, accessible continuing professional development opportunities and supportive, member-centric programming and advocacy. Visit sonographycanada.ca to learn more or contact Meagan Rockett, Manager of Membership and Communications (mrockett@sonographycanada.ca).

CSMLS: The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) is the national certifying body for medical laboratory technologists and medical laboratory assistants, and the national professional society for Canada's medical laboratory professionals. We are a not-for-profit organization that is funded entirely by membership dues and revenues from goods and services. We do not receive operational funding from governments or other organizations. We invite you to visit us at csmls.org for more information. Please send any inquiries to Michael Grant, Director, Marketing & Communications (michaelg@csmls.org).