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Canadian Neurological Sciences Federation
CNSF Advocacy Committee

URGENT COMMUNICATION

July 6, 2022

Dear All CNSF Practising Physicians:

The CNSF is contacting you urgently with respect to an immediate and ongoing shortage of intravenous iodinated contrast (radio-contrast media) in Canada. Contrast media is used during CT imaging, during fluoroscopy for endovascular intervention and in some urological procedures. This applies to all types of CT Imaging of patients with vascular disorders, inflammatory and neoplastic diseases. About 25% of all contrast enhanced CT studies are performed on patients with neurological diseases and about 10-15% of all contrast media is used for patients with neurological diseases.

While there are several manufacturers of contrast material worldwide, the most frequently source used in Canada is GE Healthcare, which manufactures iohexol (Omnipaque™) and iodixanol (Visipaque™). Iohexol for North America is principally manufactured in Shanghai China, a city that has been severely impacted by COVID restrictions. Manufacturing in Ireland is destined primarily for the European market. Current supply at most institutions in Canada will last weeks only.

Supply-chain disruption in iohexol shipping will be sorted out over the next several months but is expected to last until well into the fall 2022.

Local and Provincial Health Care providers are acutely aware of this evolving situation and local guidelines to adjust/restrict the use of contrast material to specific medical emergencies only, have been produced. This will likely significantly impact the way patients with requests for imaging will be managed at the Institutional level and will likely cause delays in patient care in the upcoming weeks.

As an ordering physician you have a role in preserving supply of contrast media for use in emergency situations. Where you can utilize MR imaging, Ultrasound imaging (including transcranial doppler) and non-contrast CT, please do so.

The CNSF recommends you be acutely aware of the likely impact of the shortage in contrast material in the upcoming days and weeks as it will impact the investigation of patients with neurological disorders and will require you to adjust the management and expectations of your patients accordingly.

Sincerely
Canadian Neurological Sciences Federation (CNSF)
Canadian Society of Neuroradiology (CSNR)