



Requesting non-ionising imaging

guidance for Faculty of Physician Associate members

There is strict guidance in relation to which healthcare professionals can request ionising radiation. In this guidance, we explore a PA's involvement.

Ionising radiation

Guidance known as the [IR\(ME\)R guidance](#) relates to ionising radiation, including **X-rays** and **CT scans**, both of which use X-rays or Gamma rays.

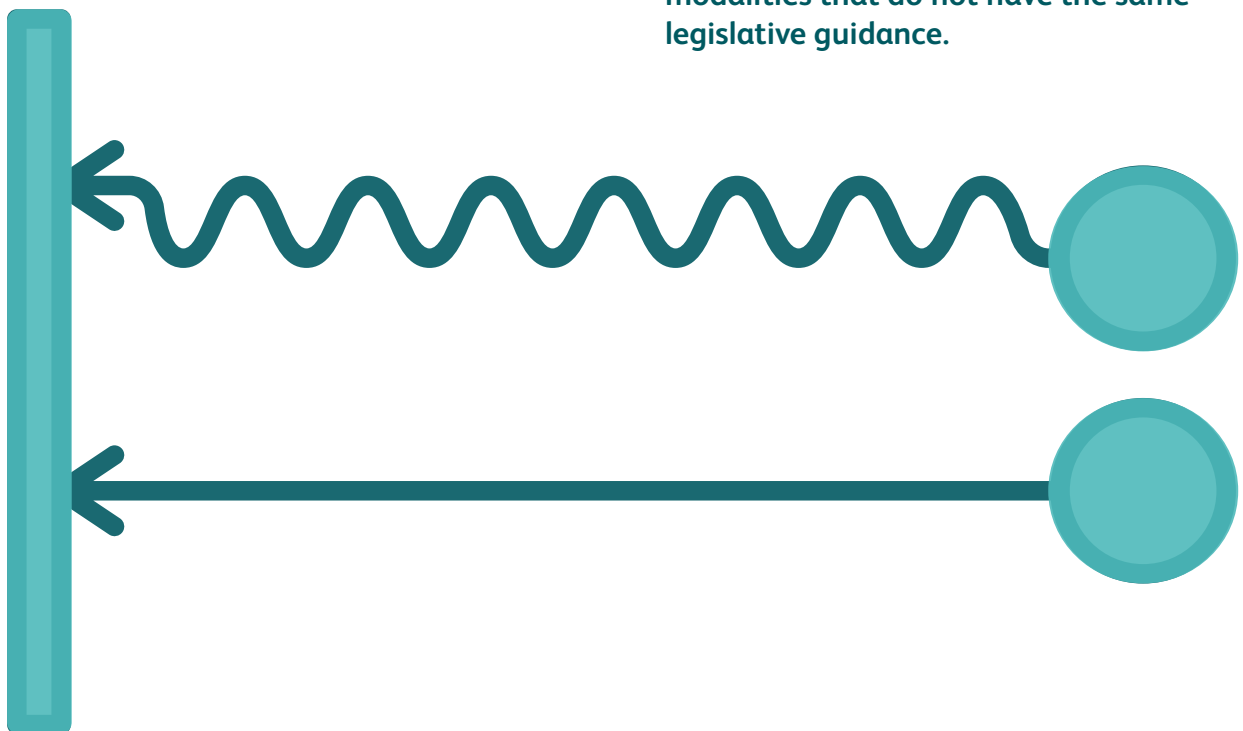
Currently, PAs are unable to refer patients for these forms of radiation. However, this will change when the PA profession becomes regulated.

Non-ionising radiation

Non-ionising radiation includes **ultrasound scanning** and **magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)**. Ultrasound scanning uses sound waves and MRIs use the magnetisation of protons.

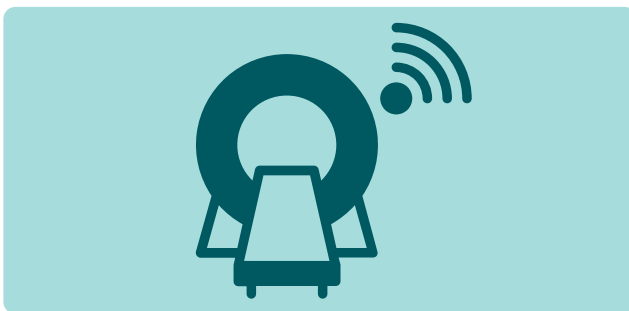
PAs can refer patients for ultrasound scanning and MRIs if local governance is in place. In some locations, only consultants are allowed to refer patients for MRI scanning, but legally PAs can if radiologists offer permission.

There are, however, other imaging modalities that do not have the same legislative guidance.





‘There are no legislative restrictions in place that would prevent PAs from referring patients for non-ionising radiation procedures.’*



In some NHS trusts, MRI scans can only be requested by consultant level practitioners. This restriction does not usually apply to other non-ionising imaging modalities.



PAs can sometimes request specific ultrasound examinations, providing that the request is justified, and the rationale is clear to the performing and reporting clinician.

Here are some considerations to be aware of when developing governance for non-ionising imaging:



- ✓ What imaging modalities will be included?



- ✓ What details will be required as part of the referral?



- ✓ Who will be responsible for reviewing and acting upon the results of the investigation?

*However, you may be subject to local guidance. Good communication with the radiology department and PA lead within the organisation is vital to the development of robust governance.