

EDITORIAL: APRANEMN – The 3rd pillar of National Radiology

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In 2018, facing multiple and growing adversities, radiologist groups began to form organically on social media in the north of the country (WhatsApp). Their rapid growth, driven by the spontaneous participation of doctors, interns, and specialists, and the consolidation and discussion of topics in the forums, led to the need for tangible actions. This culminated in the formalization of the statutes of the Portuguese Association of Radiology, Neuroradiology, and Nuclear Medicine (**Associação Portuguesa de Radiologia, Neuroradiologia e Medicina Nuclear - APRANEMN**) on February 2nd, 2019.

This non-profit medical association aims to complement the Colleges of Specialties and Scientific Societies in their goals, which are primarily focused, through their statutes, on training, regulatory, technical, and scientific aspects of the specialties. **APRANEMN introduces new aspects: the valorization and defense of the specialties, through the recognition of their own acts and their doctors, alongside other specialties and society. Together, Colleges, Societies and APRANEMN form the tripod that defends and sustains the specialties, interacting and enhancing synergies among them.**

The preservation of radiological procedures within the domain of doctors and the specialties that study, develop, and refine them is, in itself, a guarantee of maintaining the quality of diagnoses and intervention procedures. This (quality) appears to be decisive, not only to obtain an **immediate added value of the procedure for the patient**, but also for the **added value that it brings to the outcome of care**, by impacting the management and quality of the entire subsequent chain.

The quality radiological act should not be viewed as a cost but rather as a crucial factor in optimizing the process. By preventing subsequent unproductive and inadequate acts (diagnosis, intervention, and therapy), it promotes the preventive reduction of waste and costs in the chain, thus **being a gain to the system** that should be emphasized.

In recent decades, population aging, social and forensic pressure on prescribers, together with the evolution of technological supply, have contributed decisively to the increase in the number of radiological procedures, exceeding the response capacity of radiologists, contributing to **work overload and burnout**, and to the **devaluation of payment for medical procedures**.

Similar to other specialties, **the emergence of movements that favor the ad hoc distribution of procedures by unqualified professionals** as a solution to increase response and reduce examination costs, along with the opportunistic appropriation/usurpation of procedures by these professionals, proves to be counterproductive. It promotes inappropriate or unnecessary procedures of lower quality, delays timely diagnoses, amplifies clinical errors, and introduces new (but predictable) disruptions in the care chain, with potentially serious consequences. In short, **it compromises patient safety**.

It is the responsibility of the radiologist/NR/NM to contribute to finding, promoting, and implementing appropriate and controlled solutions to address the waiting times required by clinical situations and populations, while maintaining the desired quality and controlled costs, considering the different specificities and geographical realities. **The radiologist/NR/NM must be at the heart of the decision-making process** and not leave this empty space to poorly informed decision-makers and to unqualified opportunism.

APRANEMN emerged in this context, seeking to address the various challenges we all face, working with dedication to find the broadest consensus and the best structural solutions. **Believing that the best path to patient safety and achieving real gains in healthcare is inseparable from the performance of quality actions, APRANEMN bases its strategies and actions on the consistent appreciation of radiologists, neuroradiologists and nuclear physicians and their radiological work.** Some of the actions developed are briefly listed below:

Intervention with the supervisory authorities: drafting of a document listing the biggest problems and challenges in Radiology that require solutions, which was presented on 31/07/2019 to the parliamentary groups and the Parliamentary Committee for Health, in the National Assembly.

Advocacy and Regulation. Highlights include:

- Participation in public consultations;
- Successful participation in mediation of conflicts between radiologists and employers;
- Preparation of several proposals and contributions to the ACSS, to ensure the quality and safety of radiological medical procedures, some of which were incorporated into Ordinance No. 100/2024/1-DR.
- Holding webinars to provide legal clarifications, featuring speakers specialized in Medical Law: “The contract with the health entity: typologies and legal impacts” and “Legal duties of doctors”;

- Preparation of a document in Q&A format: “Informed consent and legal responsibility of the imaging specialist”, with the answers given by the lawyer, Dr. António Santa Comba to the radiologists;

- Requests for various legal opinions and legal advices;

- Communication to the ERS, IGAS, ASAE, the Ethics and Deontology Council and the Medical Act Observatory of the OM, of several cases of usurpation of radiology acts and promotional campaigns that include imaging exams.

APRANEMN is currently supporting a legal process involving usurpation of functions that is already under investigation.

Communication with the press: Issuing press releases and open letters, and participating in several interviews on national TV channels and in the print media to highlight issues within the specialties. **Communication with and among radiologists**, through WhatsApp groups, facilitating the dissemination of useful information, which was especially relevant, for example, at the time of the pandemic. **Communication and partnerships** with medical and non-medical entities: including the Portuguese Medical Association and Colleges, radiological and non-radiological scientific associations (notably the SPRMN, especially the Radiology Management and Quality Section, the SPMUE, among others), the Superior Council of the National Health Convention, and patient associations.

Training and Education: APRANEMN organized several **webinars**, spaces for in-depth discussion and exchange of ideas on emerging topics. Two notable transformative actions included: “Sub-specializations in Radiology: Importance, Opportunities, and Challenges” and “Nomenclature and Unitary Valorization of the Medical Act,” attended by the President of the Portuguese Medical Council (PMC) and the President of the CNEMPC of the PMC. The **APRANEMN Conferences** are spaces for reflection across specialties, on current topics - the last ones dedicated to teleradiology - and include hands-on courses for interns. It was in November 2019, at the 1st Conference, that, as an initiative of APRANEMN and the College of Radiology, the CNIR was reactivated. The **SIV Course**, certified by the ERC (European Resuscitation Council), has already been held 5 times, covering more than one hundred radiologists. It is the result of a partnership between APRANEMN and the CPR, and it includes a specific module for adverse reactions in Radiology. The 1st edition of the recertification course took place in February 2025. The APRANEMN **POCUS Course**, with Scientific Sponsorship from the OM, and which has the collaboration of cardiologists from the SPC, is aimed at emergency physicians and emergencies and it is a way of positioning radiologists in this training area, which is included in the curricula of the Emergency Medicine Specialty and in the regulations of the Via Verde do Trauma (trauma fast track). The first edition took place in November 2024.

“A doctor who only knows about medicine does not even know about medicine”, José de Lentamendi, doctor, said at the end of the 19th century, a phrase popularized in Portugal by Abel Salazar.

Without being part of permanent and continuous interaction with other specialties, with other health sectors and decision-makers, and if it is abstracted from the characteristics and specificities of the society in which it operates, combined with weak holistic literacy (especially legal and management),

Radiology crystallizes in a bubble, it is devalued and abandoned to the (easy) mercy of appropriation and perhaps even expropriation.

Increasing the visibility and dignity of the specialties of Radiology, Neuroradiology, and Nuclear Medicine among other specialties, political decision-makers, patients, and society in general, reaffirms their irreplaceable importance, central to Medicine and quality patient care. **Placing the specialist doctor at the center of decision-making is the goal and the greatest future challenge that lies ahead for all of us. It's APRANEMN's goal.**

We have around 400 members, but we aim to include everyone in this journey to increase our representation.

We would like to thank SPRMN and Acta Radiológica Portuguesa for this opportunity to promote our mission. May this collaboration continue to strengthen our commitment to building a better future together.

Because together we are stronger: join and register!

Registration: <https://www.apranemn.pt/associados/>

www.apranemn.pt

email: geral@apranemn.pt

Links to groups:

Whatsapp group-south:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/LaByoWrAPdAEcVz86LeTaD>

Whatsapp group-north:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/IIzmNCsHTbp7fG24dARAFw>

Whatsapp group-center:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/3wetBPWOc08E9cqwxILdKF>

Abbreviations:

ACSS- Administração Central do Sistema de Saúde

ASAE- Autoridade de Segurança Alimentar e Económica

CNEMPC- Conselho Nacional de Exercício da Medicina Privada e Convencionada

CNIR- Comissão Nacional de Internos de Radiologia

CPR- Conselho Português de Ressuscitação

ERS- Entidade Reguladora da Saúde

IGAS- Inspeção Geral das Atividades em Saúde

OM- Ordem dos Médicos

POCUS- Point Of Care Ultrasound

SIV- Suporte Imediato de Vida

SPC- Sociedade Portuguesa de Cardiologia

SPMUE- Sociedade Portuguesa de Medicina de Urgência e Emergência

SPRMN- Sociedade Portuguesa de Radiologia e Medicina Nuclear