

Ref. No: 1721
Date: 06/05/25
Subject: Guidelines for MRI referral

REQUEST

I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request information relating to A&E MRI scan referrals guideline procedures:

- What are A&E guideline procedures for referring patients to MRI scans?

RESPONSE

As Emergency Medicine providers at Southport Hospital, we have two pathways with which we can request an MRI scan:

- For patients that we suspect to have Cauda Equina, there is a pathway in which we are able to request lumbar/sacral MRI imaging. The results of these scans are collated and reviewed by our doctors and a decision on appropriate further management, e.g. referral to neurosurgical spinal services, would be made by a member of our consultant team.
- For patients with back pain in which we suspect metastatic spinal cord compression that can be managed in the out-patient setting, we have a pathway where we would request a whole spine MRI, with follow up by the acute oncology team.

Other than these two examples we do not have any further “guidelines” or “procedures” with which we would request MRI imaging.

For Emergency Medicine providers at STHK

MRI for scaphoid fracture. This is done through ED r/v clinic when somebody still has scaphoid tenderness and rpt Xray is inconclusive. An urgent MRI is requested, usually within a week or so.

MRI for suspected Cauda equina syndrome (CES). If the patient has signs of CES that have occurred in the last 24 hours, then we will order

an immediate same day. If outside our department's operating hours, we will refer the pt to Walton using Orion for them to decide on whether to transfer to their 24-hour MRI facility, or to wait for an MRI at Whiston the next morning.

MRI for suspected CES (symptoms longer than 24 hours) We will request an urgent MRI that is completed the next day.

All patients with possible CES are discussed with the shift lead.

Any other MRI requests are not on a pathway and are after discussion between ED and radiologists, but are usually referred to an in-patient specialty.