



Society of Interventional Radiology Policy Statement: Exclusive Contracts and Carve-outs for Interventional Radiology Services

Background:

The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and its member boards recognized interventional radiology as a primary specialty in 2012.¹ Primary specialty status acknowledges that interventional radiology is distinct from diagnostic radiology and all other clinical specialties in medicine. This distinction is based on the unique skill set comprised of competency in clinical and peri-procedural patient care, diagnostic imaging, and image-guided procedures. The ACGME established specific program requirements for interventional radiology residencies and training programs. Only successful completion of an accredited residency allows graduates to pursue interventional radiology certification by the American Board of Radiology.² ABR certification in interventional radiology recognizes and acknowledges the successful completion of formalized clinical training and expertise within the field.³

With interventional radiology now established as an ABMS primary specialty with ACGME accredited residency programs, it is critical for board-certified interventional radiologists to practice unencumbered in their chosen practice model. However, currently there are instances where exclusive professional services contracts with hospitals impede board-certified IRs from practicing independently. In these instances, exclusive professional services contracts could result in preventing patient access to high-quality IR care.

Diagnostic radiology practices frequently enter into exclusive professional services contracts with their hospitals, with interventional radiology, by default, included under this contractual umbrella; however, non-radiologists are granted exclusions or "carve-outs." These carve-outs include, but are not limited to, peripheral, musculoskeletal, and oncologic interventions which allow non-radiologists to provide the same or similar procedures which are also performed by interventional radiologists. This provides an unfair advantage for other specialties to perform interventional radiology services. Interventional radiologists not associated with the diagnostic group are unduly restricted in obtaining hospital privileges.

In acknowledgement of the issue, the American College of Radiology passed Resolution 2F during its April 2022 Annual Meeting which states: "*groups holding exclusive contracts should be open to exploring relationships (e.g., sub-contracts, affiliations, etc.) that may benefit patients in their community, and whenever appropriate, may allow independent IR physicians limited admitting and treating privileges so as to optimize continuity of patient care.*"⁴

Policy Statement:

SIR recognizes the practice of exclusive contracting between hospitals and radiology groups for radiology services is long-standing and that such contracts may be mutually beneficial to both parties. SIR strongly believes that if the exclusive contract or the hospital/facility excludes interventional radiology services or provides a carve-out (e.g., peripheral interventions, musculoskeletal interventions, non-invasive testing) so that non-radiologists may admit and treat patients and perform procedures generally performed by board certified interventional radiologists, the same opportunity to admit and treat patients and perform procedures at the facility should equally apply to independent interventional radiologists.

Disclaimer

SIR will not contribute financially to any legal action in which its interests are not directly involved. This position statement is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to be used as evidence in any legal proceeding.

Originally approved by the SIR Executive Council on Feb. 28, 2007. Revised and approved by the SIR Operations Committee on Sept. 21, 2015. Reviewed, revised and approved again by the SIR Executive Committee on Feb. 15, 2023, with final approval by the SIR Board of Directors on March 3, 2023.

References

¹American Board of Medical Specialties, ABMS (2023). Specialty and Subspecialty Certificates: American Board of Radiology. Retrieved on 08/24/2021 and reviewed until 02/13/2023.

<https://www.abms.org/board/american-board-of-radiology/>

² Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, ACGME. (2022). ACGME program requirements for graduate medical education in interventional radiology. Radiology program requirements and FAQs. Retrieved on 08/24/2021 and reviewed until 02/13/2023.

<https://www.acgme.org/specialties/radiology/program-requirements-and-faqs-and-applications/>

³American Board of Radiology, ABR (2022). Interventional radiology: initial certification for interventional radiology. Retrieved on 08/24/2021 and reviewed until 02/13/2023.

<https://www.theabr.org/interventional-radiology/initial-certification>

⁴ The American College of Radiology, ACR (2022). Exclusive contracts (*Res 2f 2021 Response: Medical staff privileges, exclusive contracts, economic credentialing*). ACR Digest of Council. 59-77. ACR Annual Meeting, April 2022. (Edited 6/06/2022). Originally retrieved on 09/01/2022 and reviewed until 02/13/2023.