

CANADIAN  
ASSOCIATION OF  
RADIOLOGISTS



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## Wait Targets Should Give Patients Hope

*Ottawa, December 12, 2005*— The Wait Time Alliance (WTA) welcomes the benchmarks announced today, calling them a turning point for Canadian patients.

“Canadian physicians and their patients see this as a critical step toward addressing timely access to medical care,” said WTA spokesperson Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai. “We are pleased with this effort and look forward to putting this plan into action with ways to measure, monitor, mitigate and manage wait times. The WTA also wants to work with governments to speed up the implementation process so everything is in place before December 31, 2007.”

The WTA produced benchmarks based on best medical evidence for a comprehensive range of health services and procedures in each of the five priority areas earlier this year. WTA members also identified the key barriers to timely access, namely shortages of both health care professionals and capacity within the health care system.

Today’s announcement by governments echoes many, but by no means all, of the recommendations outlined in the WTA report. The WTA is particularly pleased that governments have acknowledged the shortages of doctors, nurses and other professionals in the system and looks forward to concerted and collaborative action to address this problem.

“More work needs to be done with diagnostic imaging and certain aspects of sight restoration and cardiac services,” said Normand Laberge, WTA spokesperson and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Association of Radiologists. “But ultimately, we want to work together to address these concerns because lack of action in these areas may be a barrier to meeting other benchmarks.”

Moving forward, governments must address other elements contained in the WTA’s final report, *It’s About Time!: Achieving Benchmarks and Best Practices in Wait Time Management*. The report called for:

- A *Health Human Resources Reinvestment Fund* to address the dire shortage of health care providers;
- A *Wait Time Toolbox* consisting of strategies to mitigate, measure, monitor and manage wait times;
- A *Canada Health Access Fund* that would act as a safety valve or guarantee to ensure patients get access in cases where wait time benchmarks are exceeded.

In making their announcement on wait times today, the provincial, territorial and federal governments are demonstrating an understanding and new willingness to address the underlying causes of long waits for health care services. The WTA considers this collaboration, aided significantly by the efforts of Dr. Brian Postl, Federal Advisor on Wait Times, to be a signal that governments are turning the corner on wait times.

“Canada’s physicians and patients have been waiting for this type of political commitment to ensuring timely access to health care services for some time,” added Dr. Collins-Nakai. “We are pleased that the first timeline has been met and we are now ready to move ahead to make sure Canadians can get the care they need, when they need it.”

*The Wait Time Alliance of Canada (WTA) is a partnership comprised of the Canadian Medical Association and 6 speciality associations, the Canadian Association of Radiologists, the Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine, the Canadian Association of Radiation Oncologists, the Canadian Cardiovascular Society, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society, and the Canadian Orthopaedic Association.*

You can access [www.waittimealliance.ca](http://www.waittimealliance.ca) to access *It’s About Time!: Achieving Benchmarks and Best Practices in Wait Time Management*, the WTA final report.

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