
Technology and Equipment Committee Recommendations to the NC State Health Coordinating Council June 1, 2022

The Technology and Equipment Committee has twice since the last full SHCC meeting, on April 6th and May 4th.

The topics reviewed and discussed included:

- policies and methodologies for equipment covered in the SMFP;
- petitions regarding cardiac catheterization and MRI scanners;
- recommendations from the MRI Methodology workgroup; and
- draft data tables and need determinations based on information currently available.

The following is an overview of the Committee's recommendations for consideration by the SHCC pertaining to Chapter 17 of the Proposed 2023 SMFP.

Cardiac Catheterization Equipment

- The Committee received one petition regarding cardiac catheterization equipment.

Johnston Health petitioned to change the Cardiac Catheterization methodology by changing the rule for rounding in Step 5 to round up to the nearest whole number. The current methodology rounds to the nearest whole number, resulting in calculations below 0.5 being rounded down. Doing so can result in service areas failing to show a need even when their utilization is above the 80% need determination threshold, especially in those with only one catheterization lab. The Committee supported the Agency's recommendation to approve this petition.

- Application of the methodology resulted in need determinations for four units of fixed cardiac catheterization equipment, one each in Johnston, New Hanover, Orange, and Wayne counties. The needs in Johnston and Wayne counties are a result of the change in the rounding rule that was the subject of the petition. There is no need determination for shared fixed cardiac catheterization equipment.

Gamma Knives

- The Committee received no petitions or comments regarding gamma knife equipment. The SMFP has no need determination methodology for Gamma Knives.

Linear Accelerators

- The Committee received no petitions or comments regarding linear accelerators.
- Application of the methodology resulted in a need determination for one LINAC in Service Area 14, which consists of Chatham and Orange counties.

Lithotriptors

- The Committee received no petitions or comments regarding lithotriptors.
- Application of the methodology resulted in no need determinations.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Scanners

- The Committee received two petitions regarding MRI scanners.

WakeMed submitted a petition to revise Policy TE-3 by removing the condition that requires facilities to meet the definition of a “main campus” for the proposed location for a fixed MRI scanner. The Agency received five comments regarding this petition, three in favor, one opposed, and one recommending further study. The Agency recommended denial of the petition and the policy contained therein. Rather, the Agency recommended alternative edits to Policy TE-3 that accomplish the same goals as the policy proposed in the petition. The Committee approved the Agency’s recommendation.

Carolina Neurosurgery & Spine Associates requested a new policy permitting the substitution of vender-owned mobile MRI scanners with provider-owned mobile MRI scanners. The Agency received four comments on this petition, one in favor, two in opposition, and one calling for more study of the issues. The SMFP does not have a methodology to generate a need determination for mobile MRI scanners. Rather, a need determination requires a summer petition. Upon approval of the petition, anyone may apply for the CON. The Agency believes that the petition process remains a valid mechanism for the development of new mobile scanners. The Committee supported the Agency’s recommendation to deny the petition.

- At the final SHCC meeting of 2021, the Chair announced that a workgroup would be formed to review and potentially revise the MRI methodology. Dr. Greene and I co-chaired the workgroup. The nine-person workgroup met in November and December of 2021 and January and February of 2022. The workgroup formulated the following recommendations:
 - slight nomenclature changes to distinguish scans with contrast or IV sedation from those without contrast or IV sedation;
 - updated procedure times to reflect current practice;

- adjusted annual operational capacity to reflect the updated procedure times;
 - use of data to project MRI need three years beyond the reporting year;
 - inclusion of utilization data from three prior years as a basis for projecting need;
 - inclusion of population growth as another basis for projecting need; and
 - adjustment of utilization thresholds based on the number of scanners in the service area.
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- Further, staff recommended eliminating 2020 utilization from the three-year look-back period because MRI utilization decreased statewide in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff also recommended increasing the cap on need determinations in a single service area in a single year from one to two.
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- The Committee reviewed and discussed these recommendations at the April meeting and voted to accept them.
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- Application of the revised methodology results in nine need determinations for fixed MRI scanners, one each in the following service areas:
 - Brunswick
 - Cleveland
 - Duplin
 - Durham/Caswell
 - New Hanover
 - Pitt/Greene/Hyde/Tyrell
 - Randolph
 - Stanly
 - Wake

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Scanners

- The Committee received no petitions or comments regarding PET equipment. However, the Healthcare Planning staff recommended technical edits to the chapter narrative to clarify how the need determination is calculated when the service area has placeholders from previous need determinations or new CON-approved scanners. These technical edits articulate how the need determinations have always been calculated but do not change the methodology or its implementation.

- Application of the methodology results in need determinations for two fixed PET scanners, one each in Health Service Areas I and II.

Recommendation for Chapter 17: Technology & Equipment for the Proposed 2023 SMFP:

The Committee recommends that the current assumptions, methodologies and draft need determinations for cardiac catheterization equipment, gamma knives, linear accelerators, lithotriptors, MRI scanners, and PET scanners be accepted for the Proposed 2023 Plan.

Also, the Committee recommends that the SHCC authorize the staff to update all narratives, tables and need determinations for the Proposed 2023 Plan as necessary.