Dear Physician,

RE: Choosing Wisely Alberta – Low Back Pain Project

On behalf of the Department of Diagnostic Imaging Leadership Team, Edmonton Zone, Alberta Health Services, I am writing to inform you of our Lumbar Spine Appropriateness Project commencing 01 August, 2015.

As specialists in Diagnostic Imaging, we would like to work with physicians to increase the appropriateness of referrals for the investigation of low back pain.

Our research has shown that in the vast majority of cases, imaging will not contribute positively to the care of a patient with low back pain. Additionally, imaging for lower back pain does include an element of risk and should be used only under very specific circumstances. Most patients with low back pain issues are best treated by exercise and pain management.

To help increase the appropriateness of lumbar spine imaging we are instituting an enhanced screening form (attached) to be used in conjunction with requests for CT and MRI of the lumbar spine. This will provide us with adequate information to triage referrals based upon established guidelines.

This process is consistent with the provincial initiative “Toward Optimized Practice” (TOP) and the national and international “Choosing Wisely Canada” (CWC) and “Choosing Wisely” campaigns respectively.

TOP:  http://www.topalbertadoctors.org/cpgs/885801
CWC:  http://www.choosingwiselycanada.org/recommendations/radiology/

As of 01 August, 2015, our bookings department will require the attached Lumbar Spine Screening Form be completed in addition to the standard consultation form.

For your records we have included a copy of the Lumbar Spine Screening Form and “Choosing Wisely” educational materials.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Peter Froese, Executive Director, 780-735-1324
Peter.Froese@albertahealthservices.ca

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. W.W. (Bill) Anderson, MD, FRCPC
Clinical Medical Director, Edmonton Zone
Diagnostic Imaging Services