ASSESSING WORKPLACE WELLNESS
IS YOUR MRT ENVIRONMENT A GOOD FIT FOR THE LONG HAUL?

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This submission is the first in a series from members of the **CAMRT's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee**. Formed in 2024, the committee provides advice and support to the CAMRT staff and Board of Directors regarding integrating EDI principles into relevant aspects of its operations. The committee's primary focus is to provide strategic advice on fostering an inclusive environment that reflects the diverse needs and perspectives of all members. Please use this article as guideline to check off what applies to your personal work environment in the reflection sections ☑

As MRTs, we're experts at creating images that reveal what's hidden. Whether it's adjusting exposure technique factors to eliminate artifacts or positioning a patient just right to get the perfect view, precision is part of the job.

How often do we step back and examine our own "workplace image"? Is the environment you're working in one that's set up for long-term satisfaction, or is it producing some unwanted "artifacts" that might obscure your professional happiness?

Let's magnify the critical areas of a workplace and perform a wellness check.

1. Collimation: Focusing on the Workplace Culture
Just as collimation narrows the X-ray beam to improve image quality, workplace culture needs focus to ensure everything runs smoothly. Without proper collimation, scatter radiation results in a blurry image—and a poorly defined workplace culture can feel the same way, leaving you unsure of what's expected, or worse, feeling aimless. A well-collimated workplace has a clear sense of direction and goals, where communication is focused, and everyone works toward shared outcomes. Without this, confusion and inefficiency scatter, and stress levels rise.

Reflection questions:

- ☐ Does your workplace culture have clear boundaries and a sense of purpose?
- ☐ Or do you feel like you're getting hit by scatter, with mixed messages and a lack of focus?
- ☐ Is your team working together toward a shared goal, or are things more chaotic than clear?
- ☐ Have things gotten better over time or worse?

2. Exposure Technique: Leadership and Balance
Finding the right balance of kVp and mAs is key to producing a quality X-ray image—too much or too little, and the image is either overexposed or underexposed. Similarly, leadership sets the "exposure factors" for the workplace.
Good leadership strikes the right balance between giving direction and allowing autonomy. It's neither too hands-on nor too distant, much like how you would adjust settings to get the optimal image.

Without this balance, the work environment can feel like an overexposed image—too much pressure—or, conversely, underexposed with unclear streaks of quantum mottle, where you lack support and guidance.

Reflection questions:

- ☐ Are your workplace leaders providing enough support and clear direction without micromanaging?
- ☐ Or do you feel like the workplace is either overexposing you to stress or leaving you underexposed to guidance?
- ☐ Do they adjust their approach based on the needs of the team?

3. Image Artifacts: Growth and Professional Development
We've all dealt with the annoyance of artifacts on X-rays—whether it's motion blur, a misplaced lead marker, or equipment-related streaks. In the workplace, a lack of professional development or stagnant roles can be the equivalent of persistent artifacts. They're the little distractions or issues that, if left unaddressed, blur your long-term career satisfaction.
Just as artifacts can obscure an otherwise perfect image, so too can the absence of learning opportunities prevent you from achieving clarity in your career. If your workplace isn't providing chances to grow, those "artifacts" can start to pile up.

Reflection questions:

- ☐ Does your workplace offer you opportunities to learn new techniques or take on more responsibilities?
- ☐ Or are you stuck seeing the same "artifacts" day in and day out?
- ☐ Are there clear paths for professional development, or are you finding your career progress blurred by a lack of growth?

4. Expiry Dates: Work-Life Balance and Burnout Prevention
In nuclear medicine, radioisotopes come with an expiry date—wait too long, and their usefulness starts to decay.
Your work-life balance operates in much the same way. Push yourself too hard without taking breaks, and you might find your energy levels dropping like a used-up radioisotope.

The workplace needs to support a healthy balance, just like we manage the decay curve of isotopes. If the workplace constantly demands more than you can give, the risk of burnout increases.
Your energy, much like the half-life of a radiotracer, has its limits.

Reflection questions:

- ☐ Is your workplace respectful of your time and personal life, or does it feel like your energy is constantly being depleted?
- ☐ Are you given enough opportunities to recharge, or are you reaching the end of your "half-life" without any chance to refresh?

5. Quality Assurance: Feedback and Recognition
Quality assurance (QA) is a routine part of ensuring diagnostic equipment is working optimally and producing high-quality images. In much the same way, regular feedback and recognition ensure that you stay motivated and feel valued in your role. Without it, issues might go unnoticed, and you could start to feel like the work you do isn't appreciated.

Getting regular feedback is like running a quality check on a system—it helps you improve and ensures you're functioning at your best. On the other hand, a lack of feedback can feel like a faulty machine running without calibration—errors pile up, and so does frustration.

Reflection questions:

- ☐ Are you getting regular feedback from your supervisors?
- ☐ Do you feel recognized for your contributions, or does it sometimes feel like your hard work goes unnoticed?
- ☐ Is there a culture of appreciation in your workplace?

Final Diagnosis: Is Your Workplace Image Crystal Clear?
Much like ensuring an image is free of artifacts and exposure errors, evaluating your workplace environment is key to long-term success and satisfaction. MRTs work with precision and attention to detail, and the same approach applies to assessing whether your workplace is supporting your career health. By focusing on leadership balance, culture, growth opportunities, work-life balance, and recognition, you can determine if your workplace is set up for the long haul.

Prescription for Reflection:

- ☐ Is your workplace culture well-collimated, with a clear focus and direction?
- ☐ Are your leaders setting the right "exposure factors" to support you without overwhelming you?
- ☐ Do you have opportunities for professional development, or are you dealing with career "artifacts"?
- ☐ Are you maintaining a healthy "half-life" in terms of work-life balance, or are you close to burnout?
- ☐ Does your workplace provide feedback and recognition to help you improve and feel valued?

Ultimately, just like producing a high-quality scan, career satisfaction requires careful adjustment, calibration, and regular check-ups. By taking the time to reflect on these areas, you can ensure that your workplace supports not only the success of your images but the success of your long-term career as well.