Oncology in general has seen vast advancements over recent years. Improved understanding of tumor biology, multidisciplinary team decisions and an individualized therapy are cornerstones of treatment planning for cancer patients today. These developments have challenged the imaging community with ever more specific questions on tumor detection, staging and therapy control. Whereas this evolution applies to many tumor entities, rectal cancer takes an outstanding role, as it was the recognition of certain anatomical and pathological features of the disease, with the help of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), that induced radiology not only to aid in disease management, but in fact to be a powerful engine for new concepts in rectal cancer treatment.

The continuous improvement of highly specialized MRI and the groundbreaking scientific contributions of radiologists all over the world have paved the way for substantial refinements of this technique during the last decade.

Consequently, dedicated imaging protocols for routine diagnostic work-up of rectal cancer patients are now available, which can guide multidisciplinary team decisions and, in combination with optimized surgery and chemoradiotherapy, lead to longer survival and a better quality of life.

Besides the scientific advances, the enduring clinical success of MRI in the field of rectal cancer is highly contingent upon expertise. To this end, ongoing education and continuous training are vital.

MRI of Rectal Cancer – Clinical Atlas is a comprehensive yet streamlined synopsis reflecting current clinical opinions and case-based imaging features of rectal cancer. We hope it will aid radiologists and clinicians in understanding the essential aspects of rectal cancer and in incorporating this knowledge into their daily practice.

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