

DEVELOPING PRACTICE IN RADIOGRAPHY AND DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING

Richard Price, PhD Study, University of Hertfordshire, October 2006

ABSTRACT

An increase in the range and capability of imaging modalities has resulted in greater demands for radiology services. This research investigates how these changes have affected role requirements and role extensions of radiographers and the consequent implications for the educational needs of radiographers.

Semi-structured interviews and three successive surveys of NHS radiography managers showed that the adoption and diffusion of extended roles in radiography had increased significantly over a ten year period. Role changes included additions both to the procedures carried out by radiographers, and to the reporting of procedures, e.g. film reporting, once the domain of radiologists, is now undertaken by radiographers in many trusts.

Imaging managers' views on the factors that encouraged or deterred the introduction of extended roles were explored. While many radiographers were keen to adopt new roles, implementation was unlikely without radiological support. Respondents believed the proposed 'four-tier structure' would help overcome staffing difficulties, while providing an improved career framework to advance the professional status of radiographers. A key theme was the need for greater clinical knowledge to facilitate transition to advanced practice.

Three studies investigated radiography education. The first used a survey to investigate the preparedness for practice of three cohorts of newly qualified radiographers. Graduates recognised the importance of continuing professional development with extended role skills identified as a priority. The second study examined the relationship between contemporary practice and UK undergraduate radiography curricula. Most programmes had responded positively to developing technology. The third study used a survey to investigate the training for extended roles provided by employers. While most provided some training, much was unaccredited, and there was considerable variation in the duration of training for similar roles.

The research has documented developments taking place at a time of enormous technological innovation. It provides key data on the changing practice of radiography that will be useful to all stakeholders planning improvements to radiography services. The data lead to a re-definition of practice and recommendations for supporting education and training.