

Beverly Snaith and Maryann Hardy

CoR Research Award - £5000

Establishing a standard for radiographer commenting in the accident and emergency environment in the UK

Background

Professional practice has developed within diagnostic trauma radiography to a level at which the radiographer not only has responsibility for patient care and image production, but also image evaluation and communication of an initial interpretation to the referring clinicianⁱ. This interpretation has, for the last two decades, been through the application of a 'red dot' to signify radiographer identification of abnormalityⁱⁱ. However, this has more recently evolved, in recognition of radiographer contribution to patient pathways, as radiographer comment schemesⁱⁱⁱ.

The vision of the CoR is that by 2010, every radiographer will be able to undertake an initial review of a radiograph in the context of Accident and Emergency (A&E) practice and communicate the resultant findings in written or verbal form¹. However, while accepting the Quality Assurance Agency's benchmark statements and Curriculum Framework for pre-registration radiographer education, there has been no specific guidance on initial or ongoing education. Further, the implementation of radiographer comment schemes has been locally driven without formal evaluation of the evidence base, and knowledge of developments at a national level is limited^{iv}.

Plain film A&E radiography referrals constitute a significant proportion of an imaging department workload. Further, a large number of these referrals are made during the out of hours period where the examining radiographer may be the most senior member of the radiology team. This is particularly significant as many band 5 positions advertised as appropriate for newly qualified radiographers routinely include out of hours duties and A&E rotations. Consequently, this proposed study will have implications for both service delivery and the further development of radiographer roles across the UK.

Aims and objectives

This research aims to establish the baseline of current radiographer image interpretation practice in the UK, encompassing the continuum from red dot to definitive reporting. This will include recommendations on initial and ongoing

education and training, implementation guidance and quality assurance mechanisms.

Methodology

- Review of literature - systematic approach
- Cross-sectional survey using an on-line questionnaire to be distributed to:
 - Managers of clinical departments
 - Radiography departments within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- Questionnaire to include closed, semi-structured and forced response question styles with opportunity for free-text comment
- Analysis of the responses (clinical departments)
 - Quantitative analysis using STATA statistical package to include comparison of responses by hospital type, location and current practice including protocols and training and any supportive evidence submitted by the respondents e.g. comment proforma.
 - Qualitative analysis of the free-text comment will be undertaken using evaluation of themes
- Analysis of the responses (HEIs)
 - Quantitative analysis using STATA statistical package to include comparison of responses by pre-registration educational programme, location, cohort size, post-graduate and CPD programmes offered.
 - Qualitative analysis of the free-text comment will be undertaken using evaluation of themes
- Develop outcomes and recommendation to the CoR to support the development of professional guidance on the further development of radiographer image interpretation at all levels.
- Support the CoR in development of the professional guidance if required.

Potential impact

Questionnaires will be distributed directly to all HEIs and Trusts. Research approval will be sought from the Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust. All data collected will be confidential and respondents will be assured of this in a covering letter. All data will be maintained on a secure password protected computer.

Outcomes

- Knowledge and understanding of the current evidence base regarding commenting practices
- Appreciation of current commenting practice in the UK
- Development of a standardised commenting tool

- Identification of the initial and ongoing education requirements for adoption of radiographer commenting by the profession
- Suggest quality assurance mechanisms for such a scheme
- Support the publication of professional CoR guidance
- Propose further research including the potential for a multi-centre trial of comment system

Timetable

| | |
|---------------|--|
| October 2006 | Literature review to establish evidence base and support questionnaire formulation Research governance process initiated within Mid Yorkshire hospitals NHS Trust |
| December 2006 | Formulation and piloting of questionnaires |
| January 2007 | National distribution of questionnaires |
| February 2007 | Reminders issued to respondents |
| February 2007 | Analysis of questionnaire data |
| April 2007 | Formulation of draft report to CoR |
| May 2007 | Formulation of final report and recommendations to the CoR |
| June 2007 | UKRC presentation |
| July 2007 | Paper submitted to <i>Radiography</i> for peer review |

Evaluation and dissemination strategy

Dissemination will be through professional body publication, conference presentation and peer review journal article.

ⁱ College of Radiographers (2005) Medical image interpretation and clinical reporting by non-radiologists : The role of the radiographer. CoR: London.

ⁱⁱ Berman L, de Lacey G, Twomey E, Twomey B, Welch T & Eban R (1985) Reducing errors in the accident department: a simple method using radiographers. *BMJ*, 290, 421-2.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hardy M & Snaith B (2005) Developing and implementing radiographer comment schemes: issues for consideration. *Synergy*, November, 4-9.

^{iv} Snaith BA (2003) Are Trusts replacing the red dot? *BJR UKRC Supplement*, 46-7.