

Sloane, Charles and Miller, Paul K. (2016) Soft skills and hard lessons: the future of radiography education in the UK. In: UK Radiological Congress (UKRC), 6-8 June 2016, ACC Liverpool, UK.

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Soft Skills & Hard Lessons

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### Background

- Diagnostic Radiography curricula have remained largely static since the inception of degrees in the late 1980s
- Medical imaging technology & imaging services have changed significantly e.g. MRI has seen a 220% increase in activity over the last 10 years
- Curricula driven by national occupational standards e.g. HCPC Standards of Proficiency

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### Research Questions

- How fit for purpose are radiography graduates?
- Are current curricula aligning with the needs of service?
- How should curricula evolve in the future?

Project intended to open up debates & deepen understanding of current issues

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### Method:

- Data collected by means of semi-structured interviews
- A formalised schedule of open questions was developed to elucidate all priority issues
- Responses recorded & transcribed verbatim
- Ethical clearance sought and provided through university ethics committee
- Participants were provided with relevant information, an interview schedule and consented prior to study

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### Participants

- Convenience sample of Radiology Service Managers n=20
- 5 Male, 15 female

#### Geographic Distribution of Sample

#### Role of interviewee

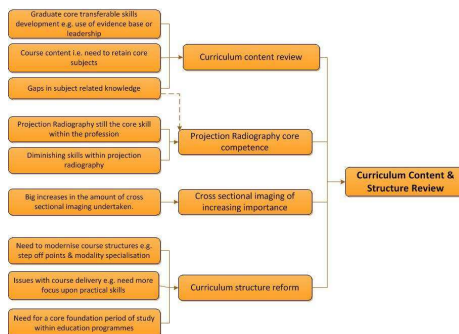
#### Type of Service Providers

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### Data Analysis

- δ Straussian Grounded Theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) utilised for the qualitative data
- δ Responses were initially free coded & grouped into sub themes and meta-themes
- δ Method designed to display the range of emergent themes and not to accord significance according to frequency of occurrence
- δ The personal experiences of participants & factors which impact upon service were focussed upon

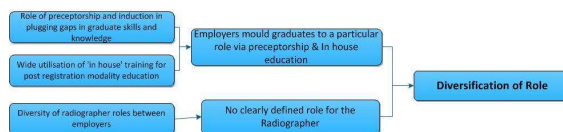
### Theme 1: Curriculum Content & Structure Review



### Quote related to theme 1

: I mean, one thing that I've seen is that radiographers are moving out of general radiography more quickly than ever. Almost to the point where you start to question whether it's worth doing a radiography degree at allü... (Interview 16)

### Theme 2: Diversification of Role

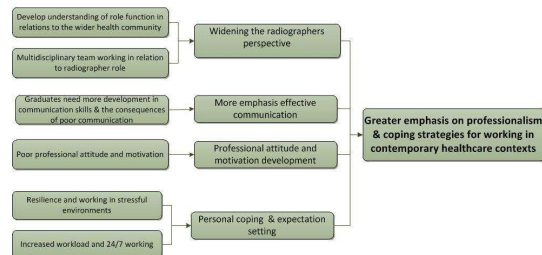


### Quotes related to theme 2

:Because of the size of general radiography, and the complexity of general radiography, they actually found it quite difficult to maintain competence in more than one modality. (interview 17)

:We are very, very careful with our new graduates in terms of induction, so, for example, we have a twelve week induction programmeüüü. where they're supernumerary, and it's well established in terms of they go round all the clinical areas. (interview 20)

### Theme 3: Professionalism & Coping

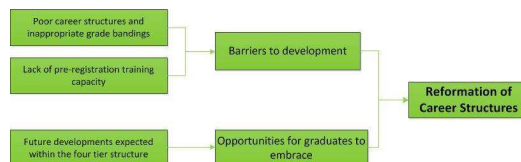


### Quotes related to theme 3 cont.

:I think one of the main things for me is about the level of autonomy that, erm some of the staff have now. I don't feel that they're quite as self-sufficient as they used to be, I think there's a level of having to be spoon fed and not taking ownership for their own competence and professional development." (Interview 15)

Well, things like, you know, you know, the demands of the job, of them having an understanding of the demands of the job, that actually they do have to work weekends and bank holidays, it's like a shock sometimes to some of them that come in." (interview 9)

### Theme 4: Reformation of Career Structures



### Quotes related to Meta theme 4

:what's happening here, and I'm sure we're not alone, is that general radiography is constantly being drained to furnish the staff for the MRI, CT, intervention, so we end up with the junior radiographers doing some of the most complex work." (interview 10)

:we should look to building that (projection radiography) as more of a lifelong career for people and not just the stepping stone that a lot of people see it as today" (interview 3)

### Discussion & Conclusions

- ∅ Increased pressures and changes in working practices require graduates to be resilient have realistic expectations about their career
- ∅ The role of the radiographer is evolving rapidly and the role is becoming quite nebulous
- ∅ The increase in cross sectional imaging should impact upon the development of future curricula
- ∅ Lack of clinical placement capacity is a major driver for change
- ∅ Education reforms would need to be coupled with career structure reform
- ∅ Significant challenges exist in relation to motivation, communication professionalism...
- ∅ Marketisation of both health and health education producing many issues which both HEIs and employers have to deal with.
- ∅ Changes in professional identity, student capacity issues and mismatches between the two are embedded in broader patterns of socioeconomic change. We need to understand this a find fluid an flexible responses to these challenges that start with addressing identity.

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