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Background: Over the last decade, progressively fewer available posts in UK sonography have been filled [1,2]. As such, interventions in higher education (HE) to attract new blood have become a matter of increasing interest for medical imaging research [3,4]. While this corpus of literature has produced a range of actionable findings to date, the views of employers in clinical ultrasound around how the issue might be addressed in HE have remained largely unresearched.

Methods: Three models of ultrasound education were proposed to N=20 ultrasound department leads in public (n=17) and private (n=3) units: 1. The direct entry undergraduate model (DEUM); 2. The direct entry postgraduate model (DEPM); and 3. The 3+1 postgraduate model (31PM). Participants were encouraged to express a preference, reasons for their preference, and which components of each model were desirable/undesirable. Using a Straussian model of Grounded Theory [5,6], the extended accounts provided were analysed.

Results: Of the participants, n=9 indicated a sole preference for the DEPM, while n=3 indicated a sole preference for the 31PM. However, n=8 found variable strengths/weaknesses in each. Qualitative concerns thematised as: 1. The feed of undergraduate entry programmes into extant pay banding. 2. A lack of life, communication and time management skills synonymous with younger graduates. 3. Sustaining the current quality of sonographers without a prior background in plain radiography. 4. Condensing ultrasound learning into too brief a period.

Conclusions: There is no simple solution in HE to the sonographer shortage. Unit managers' perspectives add depth to our understanding of what might be required.