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A Two-Year Evaluation of a Direct-Entry Postgraduate Ultrasound Programme: Mapping the Student Experience

Lorelei Waring, Gareth Bolton, Shelley Smart, Charles Sloane and Paul K Miller

University of Cumbria, UK

Abstract

Background: A progressive shortage of qualified clinicians within the UK's public ultrasound departments has been documented for some time (Migration Advisory Committee, 2013), as have the organisational, physical and psychological consequences for departmental managers and working sonographers themselves (Miller *et al.*, 2018; Waring *et al.*, 2018; Bolton and Cox, 2015). Extant strategies to enhance recruitment from traditional graduate cohorts (typically diagnostic radiography) have, to date, barely kept pace with wastage.

Consequently, new direct-entry programmes have been necessitated (Society and College of Radiographers, 2013). This presentation reports findings from an evaluation of one of the UK's first postgraduate direct entry programmes, with a particular focus on student experience within the first cohort.

Methods: A thematic analysis informed by a Straussian model of Grounded Theory was employed (Sloane and Miller, 2017); semi-structured interviews with N=5 participating students with a variety of graduate backgrounds were conducted at the end of the first and the second year of the programme.

Results: Five Global themes emerged: (a) The perceived and real benefits of prior undergraduate anatomical/biological education; (b) The perceived and real benefits of prior clinical experience in any field; (c) The demands of a placement-oriented programme and the

importance of a clinical coordinator; (d) Balancing academic achievement with clinical objectives, and; (e) Concerns regarding HCPC registration.

Conclusions: It was clear that many of the academic and practical worries articulated by participating students at the end of their first year had evaporated by the end of the second. Equally, adaptations were rapidly made to the demands of placement work where it was a new experience. Managing clinical objectives and lack of HCPC registration, however, remained concerns to the end.

Keywords: education; grounded theory; postgraduate study; sonography; ultrasound;

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