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Sonographers' management of work-related musculoskeletal disorders: An ideological dilemma?

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Abstract

Background: Contradictions within common sense and the governing ideologies of cultures and institutions are typically analysed as points of practical paralysis. Although rarely acknowledged in the imaging sciences, the work of Billig et al. (1988) conversely highlights how dilemmas within ideology can also have enabling impacts on everyday thought; they can assist individuals in reasoning constructively about themselves and their social environments. Given this, the research reported in this paper explores the manners in which practicing sonographers with work-related musculoskeletal disorders manage their own professional lives. It draws particular attention to how the ideological dilemmas evident, while sometimes constrictive, can also reinforce the participants' positive self-identification.

Method: Extended semi-structured interviews with N=10 experienced sonographers working in the UK were conducted and provisionally analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Miller, Booth and Spacey, 2017). Core thematic areas that emphasised ideological contradictions were then further examined to highlight how participants specifically made sense of them.

Results: The key ideological tensions evident in the findings pertained to those between individuality and collectivity, and freedom and necessity. Evidence indicated that the participants often freely chose to work while injured, despite being fully aware of the

prospective personal costs. In doing so, they underscored both their own agency as *professionals*, and also their own commitment to a broader altruistic model that reinforced their identities as good *healthcare* professionals.

Conclusions: Ideological dilemmas provide a useful analytic framework for understanding some of the everyday aspects of working with injury in ultrasound. Further exploration of the conceptual facility thereof is recommended elsewhere in the imaging sciences.

References

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