

The challenge; A solution.

Advanced Clinical Practitioners in Breast Imaging

SIAN BURLEY¹

LUCY CIELECKI¹

SUE WILLIAMS²

BREAST IMAGING SERVICE, SHREWSBURY
AND TELFORD HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

The Challenge

55,000 women and 350 men are diagnosed with breast cancer each year in the UK. These diagnoses and subsequent treatments can not be made without breast imaging involvement.¹ Imaging is provided to patients via two referral routes; symptomatic referrals from GP's and routine breast screening for all women aged 50-70 as part of the National Health Service Breast Screening Programme [NHSBSP].

A nationally growing population and increase in health promotion and breast awareness, combined with radiologist shortages has increased demand on the breast imaging workforce. Locally this demand has pushed the breast service to its limits with overloaded clinics and increased waiting times for results.

Population growth and NHSBSP uptake

Shropshire's population is growing at a rate of 8% between census', 23% of which are over the age of 65 (higher than the national average).²

In 2019, Shropshire's NHSBSP eligible population is calculated at 92,100 women. Between 2018-2019 the minimum target of >70% attendance was surpassed with 76.13% making Shropshire the 2nd highest uptake from the 27 units in Midlands and East of England. The Age-X expansion trial has further increased the number of women eligible and has ultimately led to a an even higher attendance rate for the region.³

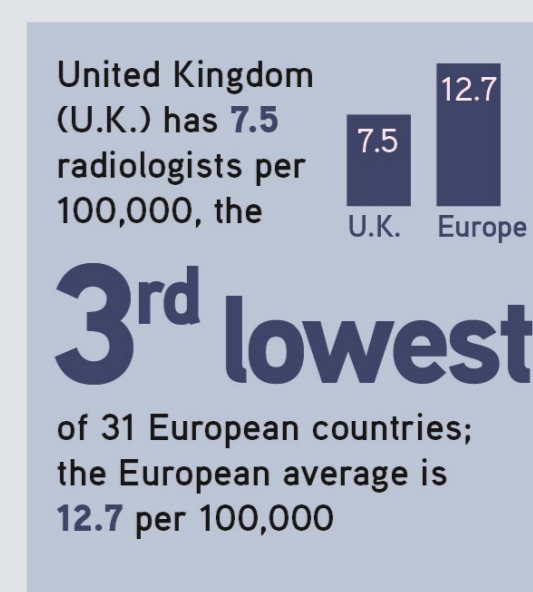
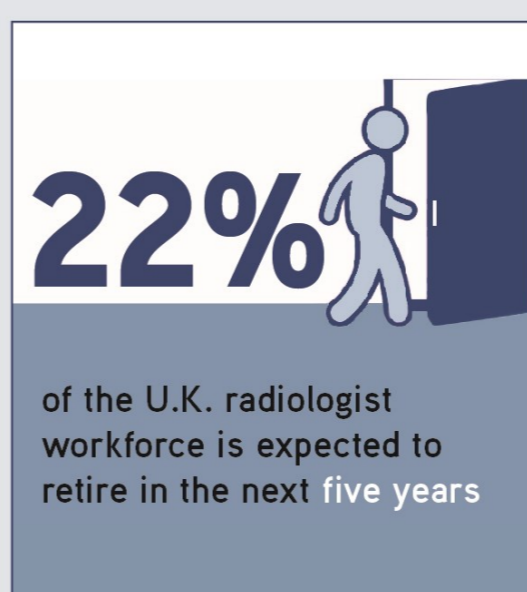
Increase in symptomatic referrals

Shropshire breast service has received a steady increase in referrals to just below 6000 patients in 2018. Factors include increased health promotion and breast awareness campaigns, pressure on GPs and as mentioned, the increase in our population.

Radiologist shortages

National statistics reported that three quarters of all radiology services do not have enough radiologists to deliver safe and effective patient care. A further reduction in radiologists in the UK is expected over the next five years. Of all modalities Breast has the most unfilled radiologist posts.⁴

Radiology Shortage Impacts the United Kingdom



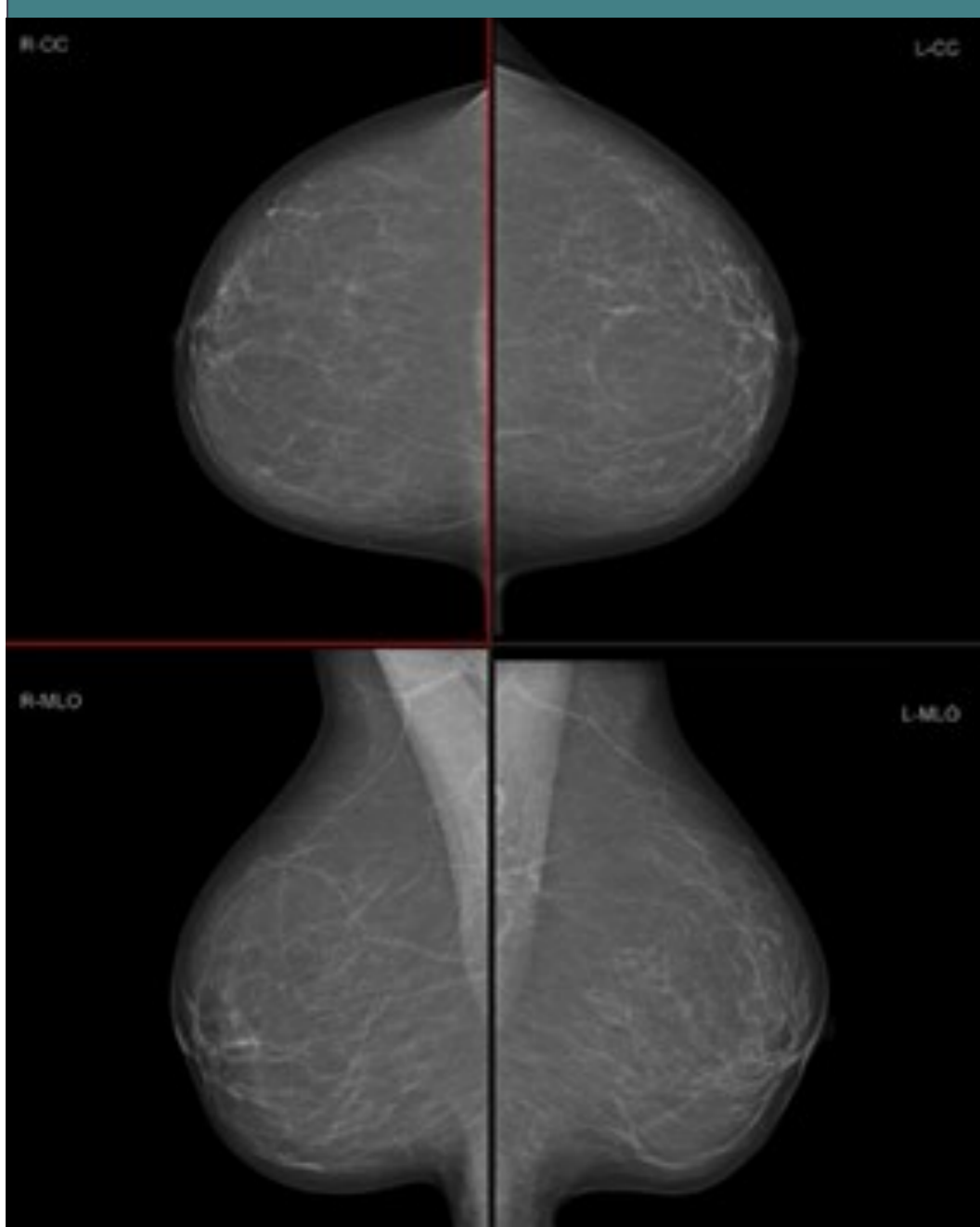
Royal College of Radiology (RCR) 2016 workforce census report, the most recent data available from RCR

The service now...

Greater demand for the service with a limited capacity

A fantastic NHSBSP uptake of 76.13% but increased waiting times for additional procedures

Shortage of radiologists to fill Breast modality posts



The Service with the addition of ACP's

Faster reporting for NHSBSP (target of 2 weeks reached)

Increased radiology supported clinic capacity

Larger skill mix

More flexibility

Use of the 4 pillars to aid in re-shaping and educating the service and its users

A Solution

Increased workforce

The Health Education England [HEE] Advanced Clinical Practitioner [ACP] Framework introduced a new tier to allow allied health professionals to extend their scope of practice.⁵

ACPs in breast imaging are qualified Radiographers at MSc level for;

- Breast Image Interpretation
- Breast Ultrasound
- Interventional Procedures i.e. breast biopsy, pre-surgery marker/wire insertions

It is proven that ACPs have assisted in resolving workload issues, staff shortages and improved job satisfaction and patient care in other imaging modalities across the UK.⁶

Locally the addition of ACPs into the Shropshire breast service has seen the introduction of an under 40's ultrasound clinic and a pain only clinic. This has directly impacted on service delivery and improved patient pathways by increased capacity within the stretched clinics.

Skill Mix

In NHSBSP ACPs have reduced the time women are waiting for their results and the time between screening and assessment appointments to within 2 weeks. This is in line with national targets.⁷

In symptomatic services capacity has increased. Working with a high level of autonomy our ACPs provide imaging support to a wider range of clinics across the trust.

ACPs play a critical role in the breast MDT. Discussing case loads and reviewing images to guide further investigations and patient pathways.

The future

To create a service fit for the future there requires investment, education and planning. These are all part of the ACP role. Education of the next generation as well as service users; GPs, colleagues and patients in order to ensure the right patients are seen in the correct clinics and timescales.

New ideas and a professional who knows the service from all aspects is ideally placed to assist in developing the service to last for generations to come.

1. Breast Cancer Now. Life Saving Research. London; 2019.

2. Shropshire Council. Older People Profile Shropshire. Shropshire; 2018.

3. National Health Service [NHS]. NHS Breast Screening Programme Central Return Data Set Overview (KC62). London; 2018.

4. The Royal College of Radiologists [RCR]. Clinical Radiology UK Workforce Census Report. London; 2018. <https://www.rcr.ac.uk/publication/clinical-radiology-uk-workforce-census-report-2018>.

5. Health Education England [HEE]. Multi-Professional Framework for Advanced Clinical Practice in England. London; 2017. https://www.lasepharmacy.hee.nhs.uk/dyn/_assets/_folder4/advanced-practice-multi-professional-framework-for-advanced-clinical-practice-in-england.pdf.

6. Snaith B, Milner RC, Harris MA. Beyond image interpretation: Capturing the impact of radiographer advanced practice through activity diaries. Radiography. 2016;22(4):e233-e238. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.radi.2016.07.005>

7. Public Health England [PHE]. NHSBSP: Clinical Guidance for Breast Cancer Screening Assessment, Publication 49. London; 2016. <https://associationofbreastsurgery.org.uk/media/1414/nhs-bsp-clinical-guidance-for-breast-cancer-screening-assessment.pdf>.

Contacts; sian.burnley@nhs.net,

lucy.cielecki@nhs.net,

susan.williams46@nhs.net

Job titles; 1. Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner in Breast Imaging.
2. Consultant Radiographer in Breast Imaging