

Dr Lynn Cuthbertson, Prof D

TITLE

The Journey to Advanced Practice and Skeletal Trauma Reporting: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Perceptions and Experiences of Diagnostic Radiographers in Scotland.

ABSTRACT

Increased demand for diagnostic imaging services has resulted in the development of a range of skill mix initiatives. Service concerns had been raised over the number of unreported diagnostic images which had impacted negatively upon patient management and quality. One area targeted for immediate attention was the reporting of skeletal trauma images for patients presenting at Accident and Emergency (A/E). This has resulted in radiographers advancing their skills and formally undertaking reporting roles since the late 1990's.

Analysis of selected literature showed that radiographers were capable of reporting skeletal trauma radiographs at levels consistent with radiologists but this brought attendant challenges including territorial issues. To date research in this area had been predominantly of a quantitative nature with little analysis of the perceptions and experiences of advanced practitioners.

The research question for this inquiry was concerned with this issue and the aim was to explore the perceptions and experiences of diagnostic radiographers who had acquired a post graduate qualification which afforded them the opportunity to report skeletal trauma images. Methodological underpinning for this work was based upon phenomenological and hermeneutic principles using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Chosen methods for the collection of data included the use of personal reflective diaries, semi-structured interviews and personal reflexivity to deal with the double hermeneutic involved. A two stage qualitative study was undertaken and the material was analysed using a six stage approach and evaluation was informed by theories of change, culture, learning, motivation and reflection.

Phase 1 thematically analysed reflective diaries which revealed key perceptions and experiences which informed Phase 2 and the use of semi-structured interviews. Phase 2 identified three superordinate themes which resonated with a professional development journey. Theme 1 was 'preparation for the skeletal reporting role'; theme 2 included 'exposure to the role' and theme 3 culminated with 'review upon and action for this role'. Throughout, the findings revealed high levels of professional and personal commitment to task, peers and colleagues. Practitioner desire to move the profession forward, improve service and educate others was also present. Future plans showed willingness to extend the skeletal reporting portfolio and aspire to consultant roles.

This study fulfilled its aim by highlighting the perceptions and experiences of a homogenous group of practitioners as they transitioned from practitioner to advanced practitioner within skeletal trauma reporting. The interpretative nature of the research filled a gap in existing

knowledge and literature and provided new knowledge and insight into the qualities of individuals involved, the professional journey, the strength of professional commitment and the desire to succeed. Feelings of increased professional status, self-esteem and job satisfaction were often associated with increased respect from a range of stakeholders. Lack of stakeholder support however created negative emotions which resulted in the need for a strong peer network. The study identified the potential for increased quality of diagnostic image acquisition, multi-disciplinary working, quality of care, service improvement and efficiency. As such the study has implications for practitioners, government, professional bodies, management, continued professional education, curriculum development and inter-professional working.