

Building capacity: an evaluation of the use of non-traditional placements in diagnostic radiography education

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Introduction

Students studying to become a diagnostic radiographer are required to undertake clinical placements in order to gain the practical skills necessary to become a registered health care professional. This totals approximately 50% of their programme¹. Recent changes in technology (such as the move to digital radiography), changes to staffing levels and shift patterns, alongside increasing demand for placements, has made placement capacity a growing issue for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)^{2,3,4}. As part of a range of strategies designed to address capacity issues, a number of new placements in care settings, and with private, voluntary and independent providers (PVIs), were rolled out to students at one UK HEI.

Aims/Objectives

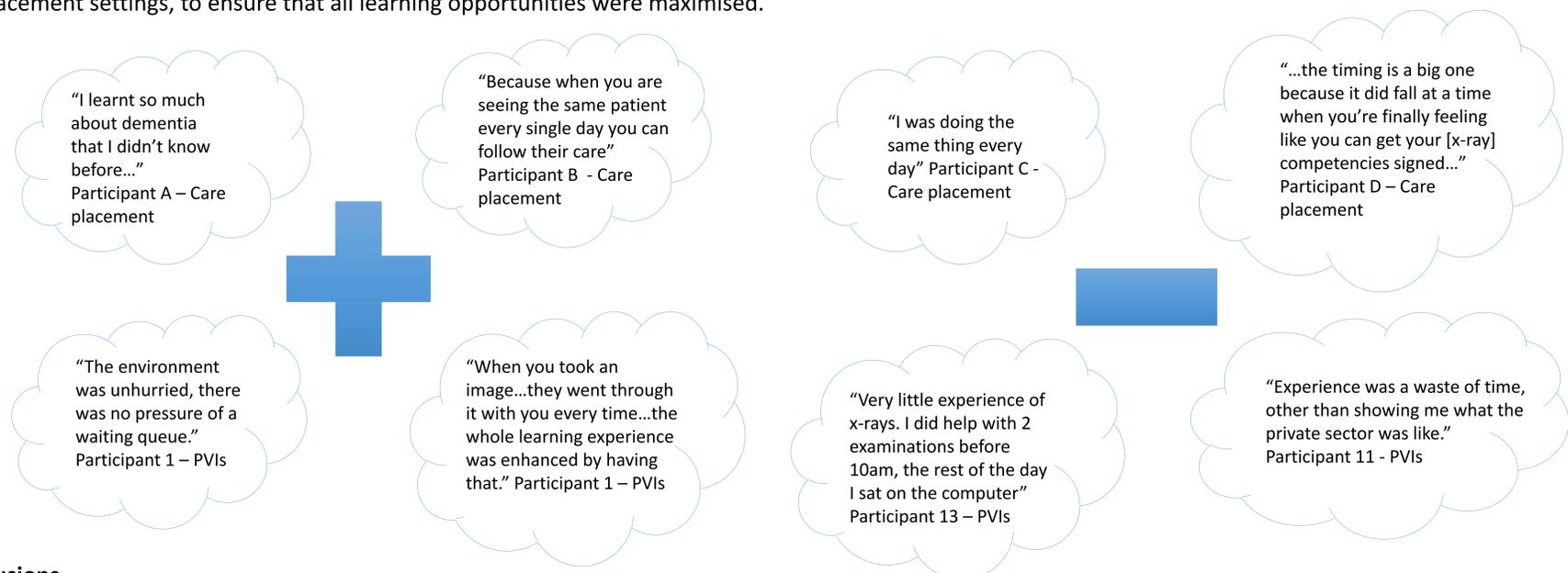
- To evaluate student radiographers' experience of a care placement in a non-imaging setting.
- To evaluate student radiographers' experience of a placement in a private, voluntary or independent provider in an imaging setting.

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was employed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was collected via a questionnaire, which utilised closed questions and a Likert scale. Qualitative data was collected from a small number of open questions on the questionnaire, and from two focus groups. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The data was analysed using a thematic approach. Ethical approval was obtained for the study. Consent was gained from all participants prior to data collection.

Results

The research found the care and PVI placements generally went well. However, it was clear that further guidance was required to support both students and staff working in the placement settings, to ensure that all learning opportunities were maximised.



Conclusions

- The care placements have increased students' knowledge and confidence about how to work with dementia patients.
- The care placements have enabled students to develop strategies to encourage patients with dementia to co-operate with examinations.
- The care placements helped students to enhance their communication skills.
- The PVI placements provided students with an opportunity to experience working in the private sector.
- The PVI placements provided a wide range of learning opportunities and clinical experience within the same week.

Recommendations

- Further guidance to be produced for clinical staff and students, to support students' learning experience during PVI and care placements.
- Some flexibility with working patterns at PVIs to ensure students on placement during the busiest times, e.g. evening clinics.

References

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