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Title

An Exploration of the Practice Placement Models used in U.K. Radiotherapy Departments.

Aim

The aim of this U.K. wide study was to explore the experiences of undergraduate (UG) radiotherapy students and their supervising practice educators within United Kingdom (U.K.) radiotherapy practice placement models.

Method

A three phase, sequential, mixed methods approach was taken. Baseline data were gathered via a broad quantitative overview of UG radiotherapy placement models in the U.K., followed by two separate quantitative arms exploring the experiences and perceptions of students and practice educators (PEs) within the models. In the final phase, two qualitative arms consisting of separate focus groups or interviews for students and PEs were conducted.

Results and Findings

Descriptive statistics were produced for Phase 1 to provide baseline data. Descriptive statistics and tests for association were conducted on Phase 2 data. Phase 3 qualitative data were interpreted by means of Framework Analysis, and from critical realist and objectivist perspectives. Overall results confirm the existence of two models of radiotherapy practice placement, i.e. the single student model (SSM) and the paired student model (PSM). The advantages and disadvantages identified by students and PEs within these models are consistent with Allied Health Professional (AHP) literature relating to the apprenticeship model, and the collaborative learning models.

Conclusion

Results suggest that neither model is superior to the other; however, implementation of the recommendations made to the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR), Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and radiotherapy departments to improve the ways in which the models are managed, assessed, and evaluated should enrich both the learning experience for students and the supervisory experience for PEs.