

An analysis of the introduction of new technologies within the hybrid imaging workforce using organisational ethnography

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Abstract/Description

The introduction of hybrid imaging technology has begun to redefine working practice in nuclear medicine. Emerging hybrid imaging techniques and evolving roles have created opportunities and challenges for nuclear medicine practitioners, and this is coupled with changes to traditional professional relationships with other health care disciplines. Organisational ethnography was utilised as a research methodology to observe working practice at three clinical hybrid imaging environments and undertake interviews with nuclear medicine practitioners. The emerging culture and professional identity of the hybrid imaging workforce was explored using symbolic interactionism which highlighted opportunities and challenges associated with introducing new technology. Practitioner diaries (weblogs) were also used to supplement the data collection and understand the current position of the workforce. Observational and thematic analysis was undertaken in order to identify a number of key themes which included 'cultural lag' in terms of the delayed adoption of new technology, 'occupational shift' around traditional tasks now being undertaken by other health disciplines, a lack of clarity around 'technological domain ownership' and variable levels of 'flat collaboration'. Incidences of technological determinism and reduced patient contact were also reported, along with a technocentric approach to the delivery of clinical services. Positive aspects of the study included evidence of role development, autonomous working practice and decision making capabilities. Innovative approaches to service delivery were documented, creating an occasion for reshaping the professional identity of the nuclear medicine practitioner. The emerging hybrid imaging environment has created an opportunity to provide a patient centric approach to service delivery and aligns to a number of government strategies focusing on innovation and improvement within the health care service. Professional reorder and an organisational shift of roles and responsibilities has begun to occur within hybrid imaging, which will undoubtedly continue to evolve over time. Appropriate training and education should to be considered for the emerging workforce, along with discussions around flat collaboration opportunities and mutual technological domain ownership.