

An investigation into first year diagnostic radiography students' preparedness to deal with very ill service users in two UK universities.

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Introduction

The impact of student radiographers' experience of the transition to their first clinical placement has been studied previously¹. Three main themes were identified as challenging for first year students: moving to a new placement area each week; communicating with very ill service users; and working with clinical staff¹. These issues echoed those identified by other authors as difficult for student radiographers, nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists during their transition to clinical placement^{2,3,4,5,6,7}. In this study we wished to investigate student experience of working with very ill service users further. For the purpose of this study we defined very ill service users as those who were acutely unwell or suffering from significant disease processes, such as cancer.

Aims

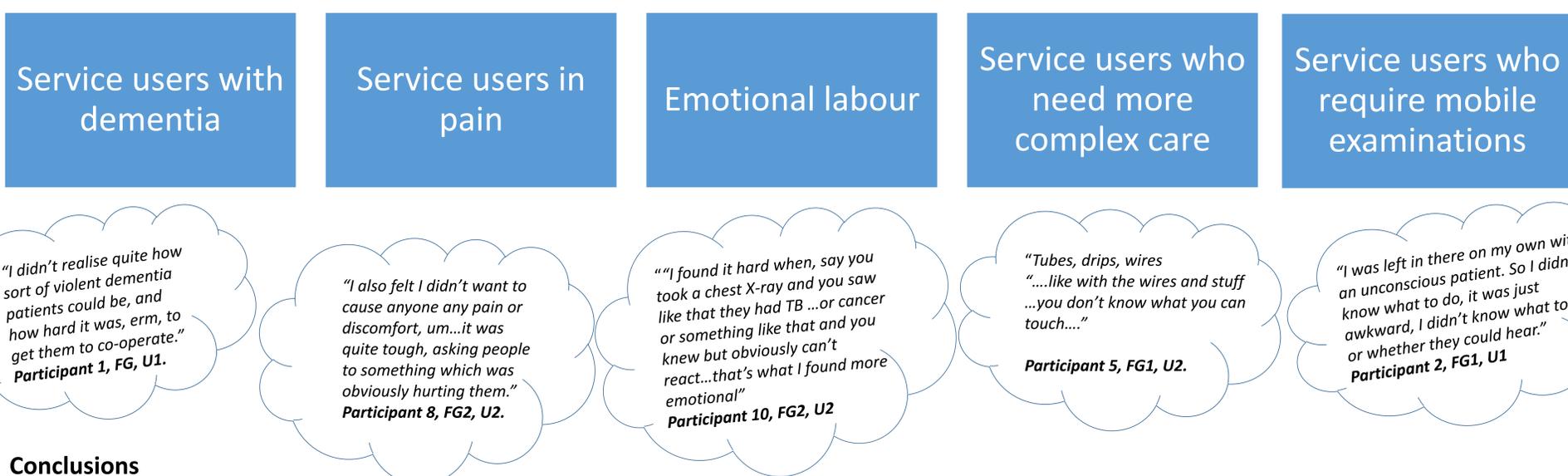
- To identify areas where student radiographers did not feel prepared for dealing with ill service users during their first placement.
- To critically evaluate the success of placement preparation activities, and make recommendations for curriculum development.

Methodology

Qualitative data were collected via focus groups held at each university. Informed consent was gained from all participants. The focus groups were audio-recorded, and then transcribed. The focus group transcripts were analysed using a thematic approach to scrutinise and code the text.

Results

Three focus groups were held, one at University 1 and two at University 2. Five key themes emerged from the focus groups:



Conclusions

In general students were well prepared for general radiography areas and did have a reasonable knowledge about what to expect on their first placement. The main areas highlighted by students as things they did not feel prepared for were service users with dementia, those with more complex needs which were out of the 'routine', and those requiring mobile examinations. In general placement preparation activities appeared effective, and students felt that they had been prepared well. However, some recommendations were made about additional activities that could be implemented into the curriculum at both HEIs.

Recommendations

- Simulation – students felt that simulation sessions would be beneficial, as they could practice some of the possible situations they may find themselves in during placement in a safe environment. This could include role play, e.g. a service user vomiting.
- Dementia awareness – students proposed further sessions about working with this group, e.g. dementia friends training.

References

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