

National AHP Informatics Strategy Taskforce

Information usage: From Consumers to Professionals

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Radiographers use information all the time. As professionals, working in the health and social care services, and as private individuals who are consumers in a global economy and living in a digital world.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are constantly evolving, developing new products and services, changing what we can do and how we can do it. We shop online, bank online and pay our taxes online. Emails have mostly replaced letters, mobile phones are replacing landlines and the internet is now the place to find information, with libraries the secondary port of call.

Many people are familiar with using consumer ICT devices such as mobiles, computers and Sat Navs in cars. Consumers want devices that are convenient and easy to use, as well as being useful for particular purposes. This can lead to a tradeoff between 'ease of use' and security, leading to security breaches and loss of confidential information.

In recent years, there have been many high profile security breaches, involving government departments, international security companies, online gaming and social networking sites. The organisation may suffer reputational damage and significant compensation claims from users, who may be worried about becoming a victim of identity theft and also unhappy at having to change their password again. The main driver of security breaches is now financial gain, as demonstrated by recent figures on cyber crime, estimated to be 1.5% of global GDP, and rising rapidly.

Are loss of confidentiality and identity theft the only issues? No. Another aspect of our digital lives is the ease with which we can search online for facts and information. Online search engines have become very good at meeting the needs of consumers/citizens for information. In 2010, search engines started using 'personalisation' to customise each user's online experience to provide different search results to the individual user, tailored to their unique digital profile. While this is convenient for consumers, it may be problematic for academics, researchers and professionals in general who expect consistency and reliability in their search results.

There could also be a deeper problem. Radiographers may become accustomed to using information routinely as consumers and find it harder to switch to a professional mindset which values a questioning and critical approach to information and the provenance of that information. As an antidote, radiographers need to ensure they remain familiar with searching academic databases for evidence to support their clinical practice, as well as using other authoritative sources such as 'NHS Evidence' (<https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/>), the 'NHS Institute for Innovation and

Improvement' (<http://www.institute.nhs.uk/>) and the King's Fund (<http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/>).

Finally, the rapid pace of innovation and change means it is a significant challenge for individuals to keep up-to-date with ICT and knowledge management technologies: the best ways to search for information; how to record and use information safely; and new ways to communicate with colleagues, patients and carers.

What are the consequences for radiographers of not keeping up to date with ICT skills, knowledge management technologies and the broader agenda of transformational informatics developments?

Clearly, information governance is a major concern because of the rapidly changing threats to personal information and the emergence of new technologies with unknown vulnerabilities. For example, many people are unaware that smartphones have cut down operating systems and require anti-malware software and other security measures usually associated with desktops and laptops.

Secondly, the slow progression towards interoperability, integrated patient records and mobile health solutions is opening up many new possibilities to save significant staff time in recording or accessing information.

Finally, the evidence on the effectiveness of tele-care is finally emerging and demonstrating significant savings alongside better service for patients in their own homes. Radiographers need to be aware of the latest developments, as they shift towards a greater proportion of diagnostics and care being provided in the community.

Fortunately, there are now many online learning modules and courses aimed at health and social care staff. For example, Connecting for Health has a wide selection of modules on information governance and information security, as well as modules on specific NHS information services, such as Choose and Book (CaB), NHS Mail, the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) and Summary Care Records (SCR). Some of these have already been highlighted previously in *Synergy News* and on www.sor.org. In addition, general advice on information security can be found at *Get Safe Online* at www.getsafeonline.org/.

While individual radiographers are responsible for identifying their own training needs, there is a role for the Society and College of Radiographers in considering whether we need to set national standards of proficiency in Informatics, ICT and tele-care for our members. The standards could cover digital literacy and basic ICT skills, knowledge management, information governance, use of electronic patient record systems and technologies that support patients in their own home such as tele-care and tele-health.

Once comprehensive standards are agreed, there will be a need to promote the importance of regular training to radiographers. Training could be integrated alongside topics where there is some overlap, such as clinical governance, research governance and corporate governance. But for some, who may think it is enough to be an experienced consumer in a digital world, there may be a significant challenge in learning different ways of using information that prioritise confidentiality over

convenience, that set a much higher threshold in terms of what is acceptable ethically and language-wise, and that require a rigorous approach to finding and using information to support clinical practice. The result will be radiographers able to switch between being ICT consumers in their private lives, to consummate professionals in their use of information and ICT at work. Hopefully, too, they will understand the dangers associated with those two lives interacting and will not fall foul of inappropriate or unacceptable behaviours when using social media.