

Dr Robert Higgins

CoRIPS Research Grant 181

£7,773 awarded

Title: The Views and Experiences of Diagnostic and Therapy Radiography Practitioners When Caring for Persons Living with Dementia in the Department: A Qualitative Study

Principle Aim

The main aim of this research is to explore the experiences and perspectives of both diagnostic and therapy radiography practitioners when providing care for persons living with dementia and when attending these services and to develop evidence-based strategies for dementia care within these settings.

Objectives:

- Discuss what imaging and therapy radiography practitioners feel are effective care strategies for persons living with dementia.
- Explore the current provision of training, strategies and tools for staff to support dementia care in local imaging and therapy radiography practice.
- Develop evidence-based strategies based on existing real-world experiences and explore how these fit with current SCoR dementia policy and guidance review.

The second revised version of the SCoR guidance for dementia (Caring for People with Dementia: a clinical practice guideline for the radiography workforce (imaging and radiotherapy)) came out following our funding application submission. In light of this new guidance an element of the study will now focus on evaluating the second revised version of the SCoR guidance for dementia and explore their implementation with regard to the evidence base.

There is a growing evidence base and body of literature exploring the care of persons living with dementia in radiography. However, much of this work is still in its infancy when compared to other disciplines such as nursing and consequently this proposal will help to grow the current knowledge base and understanding in this area. For example, the radiography practitioner interaction with persons living with dementia is unique in that these are not always face-to-face when procedures are being performed which has not been previously explored fully unlike with some other healthcare professions.

This study therefore offers the potential to build upon the current knowledge base in this area. Indeed, feedback from Dementia Associates as part of a patient and public involvement for point 5 has indicated several areas of concern including communication and explanations of procedures that warrant further investigation from the clinical perspective.

Outcomes

This study offers the opportunity to identify what specific models of care are enacted in clinical practice settings and how these align with the current SCoR guidance for persons living with dementia. The SCoR guidance could be further developed based on findings from this proposed project.

This project also offers the opportunity to explore the provision of training for radiography practitioners to provide person-centred dementia care in practice.

Review of literature and identification of current gaps in knowledge

Persons living with dementia and their carers can experience poor care in imaging departments and radiographers can find it difficult working with people with dementia. Radiographers require training about dementia so that imaging services can improve their procedures, environment and work in greater partnership with carers [4].

A literature search was used to explore what had been published regarding dementia care for persons with dementia and their carers when attending for imaging or radiotherapy. This did not conform to the PICO (Patient/Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) framework as there was neither a specific intervention nor a specific comparison. Therefore, it was decided to adapt the framework identified in Table 1 and keywords were listed under the domains of patient population, outcome and setting/professional group.

Table 1. Literature search strategy

Keywords	Patient Population	Outcome	Setting/professional group
	Dementia	Patient care	Radiographer
	Alzheimer's disease	Professional-patient interaction	Radiotherapist
		Person centred care	Allied health professionals
		Communication	
		Quality of care	

Search restrictions included English language, published between 1999 and 2019, humans, and adults. The time period to search was decided based on the seminal work published by Kitwood [5] that marked an attitudinal shift in dementia care. Searches were conducted using NHS Evidence and the following databases were searched independently MEDLINE/PubMed, CINAHL, EBSCO, Science Direct, Health and Medicine Databases – ProQuest and Google Scholar.

The search terms for each domain were used to identify MeSH headings, these differed between each database, and where no MeSH heading was available, free text was used. The searches for each domain were combined using the Boolean operator ‘OR’ and to combine the different domains the Boolean operator ‘AND’ was used. Inclusion was determined by reading the title and abstract to determine if a reference met the inclusion criteria, which was any article where the focus was on care of people with dementia in radiography or radiotherapy settings. Articles were excluded if their focus was on other care settings (e.g. community care, long term care, nursing or ward care and diagnosis).

References were prioritised for reading by date of publication with the most recent receiving higher priority, and those with a direct relevance to the radiography setting determined from the abstract.

This identified a paucity of literature focussed on the imaging or radiotherapy setting in terms of this topic. Very little literature existed from 1999-2018, with more literature identified from 2018 onwards. Nonetheless, only 6 articles that linked to the proposed research aims were identified along with the Society of Radiographers guidance on caring for people with dementia [6].

1. Summary of published literature

Most of the papers identified from the search focused on professional / radiographer attitudes towards dementia [3,4; 6-10]. Key findings from these publications included that some newly qualified radiographers felt that they had not been prepared – by their radiographic education or subsequent training –to actively manage patients with dementia and that clinical experiences can be detrimental to student attitudes if students are not supported with some confidence / intervention in dealing with some of the communication challenges often associated with dementia care. Specific educational and training interventions on improving communication and having a broader understanding of how a person living with dementia can impact upon everyday practice and limiting any distress when attending imaging or radiotherapy departments were seen as immediate priorities.

2. Gap in current knowledge & contribution of grant applications

Very little literature from 1999-2018 was identified. More literature was identified from 2018 onwards. Nonetheless, only 6 articles that directly linked to the scoping exercise were identified. Despite clinical practice guidance and recognition of the importance of persons with dementia and their carers when undergoing imaging and/or radiotherapy there is little that has been to explore how to support radiographers to provide the best care to persons living with dementia and their carers when attending for imaging and/or therapy.

Dementia educational interventions or training may help to address these areas, and this was identified as a key area for development from the literature search. It would also seem that the low quality of evidence base for guidance regarding persons living with dementia and their carers has also been acknowledged by the Society of Radiographers and identified as an area that needs to be addressed.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology will be used to investigate the perceptions and experiences of a convenience sample of imaging and therapy radiography practitioners. Nationwide on-line focus groups (OFGs) will be used followed by semi-structured phone interviews using purposive sampling of the core group from the Society of Radiographers involved with the development of dementia guidance for the radiography workforce. The core group consists of an independent education consultant who acts as lead, a diagnostic radiographer who is a clinical-academic researcher with expertise in dementia, SCoR professional officer (policy guidelines and advice) and SCoR professional Officer (clinical Imaging and research). University ethical approval will be sought.

Purposive sampling will be used to generate two focus groups for diagnostic and therapy radiographers to reflect the contextual differences between therapy and diagnostic radiography. Participants belonging to the same group (either diagnostic or therapy) may have similar frames of reference and feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with people who have lived through the same experience. Data saturation at the point where no further themes are generated for both diagnostic and therapeutic radiography focus groups will be helpful in identifying the endpoint for data saturation (endpoint).

Given the practicability of trying to arrange face to face FGs with geographical and work commitments of FG participants it is proposed that this will be a closed online asynchronous semi-structured FG to permit participants to contribute at a time that suits them. The PI will act as moderator. Similarly, semi-structured phone interviews will be used to collect individual perceptions and experiences based on the findings from the OFGs to further explore these.

However, consideration needs to be given with regard to the current situation with COVID-19. Although NHS REC approval will not be needed, the University committee and the NHS is not permitting research in NHS for the moment. Therefore, there may be a delay in getting ethical approval until the current situation resolves before the research can progress. Nonetheless, the use of OFGs and phone conversations does overcome the issue of social distancing.

Area of research activity:

Participants for the OFG using FocusGroupIt (<https://www.focusgroupit.com>) will be taken from voluntary sample of radiography practitioners in the Greater Manchester Area. OFG participants will include diagnostic or therapy radiography practitioners (assistant practitioners; diagnostic and therapy radiographers; advanced practitioners and consultant practitioners) who have performed at least 1 imaging or radiotherapy treatment on a person living with living dementia.

Participants for the phone interviews will include core stakeholders and include the Director of Professional Policy (SCoR), Regional Officer for the North West, SCoR professional officer for clinical imaging & research, A diagnostic and therapeutic lecturer.

Evaluation Strategy:

The OFG data will be analysed using a narrative approach to gain knowledge based on 'stories' from multiple perspectives to help identify 'content' that may be used to develop evidence-based strategies [11]. The phone interview data will be recorded, and transcribed verbatim and descriptive thematic analysis [12] will be supported by a qualitative data analysis tool (NVivo). A sample of both sets of transcripts will also be analysed by another member of the research team to ensure trustworthiness of findings and against the existing body of literature.

Confidentiality:

All research participants will be informed that their involvement will be confidential (where at all possible). Group participants will be asked to agree to keep the identity of other members of the group confidential. Confidentiality will be emphasised to all group members and they will be asked not to share information outside the group. However, given the professional background of the participants it is expected (although not necessarily guaranteed) that this will be followed.

Informed Consent:

University ethics approval will be required for proportionate review. NHS REC approval for this project has been confirmed as not being a requirement. Standard ethical procedures for anonymity, consent and data protection will be followed (no individual identifying information will be stored or used). Consent will make reference to the requirements to retain confidentiality for all participants involved in taking part with both focus groups.

All participants will be provided with a participant information sheet (PIS) so that they are fully informed of what the research will entail. They will then make an informed decision regarding whether they wish to participate and provide their informed consent. They will be given a minimum of 24 hours between being given the PIS and signing the consent form.

Patient and Public Involvement:

There have been discussions over a sustained time period in the development of this proposal with people living with dementia and care partners about this proposal. A visit to the University of Salford clinical imaging skill lab facilities for members of the Universities Dementia Associates Panel (a group of people with direct experience of living with, or supporting someone who is living with, dementia) was planned but had to be postponed due to COVID-19. Previous sessions with our Diagnostic Radiography students have included a visit to the Dementia Hub (June 2019) at the University of Salford where the associates shared their views on what is needed in radiography for people living with dementia as well as guest lectures in the 19/20 academic year from Dementia Associates to our students. These three activities have helped to inform the development of the proposal.

Potential impact

This research offers the opportunity to identify what specific models of care are enacted in clinical practice settings and how these fit with the current SCoR guidance for persons living with dementia. The SCoR guidance could be further modified based on these real-world experiences (evidence-based practice). This research project will also lead to a research-informed approach to teaching with the sharing of evidence-based practices for students on imaging and radiotherapy programmes.

Findings will be shared with the wider radiographic community via a cascade effect of knowledge translation with workshops at Trusts or nationally leading to the development of resources such as a toolkit or continuing professional development (CPD) activities.

Dissemination Strategy

The findings will be presented at national radiography and dementia conferences. In addition, a paper will be published in a peer reviewed journal for dissemination to the wider population within the profession as well as Imaging and Therapy Practice to ensure wide-spread dissemination. Workshops to share practice and further evaluate findings will also be used.

Following the completion of this initial research the intention will be to submit a larger grant application to the Alzheimer's Society. The aim of this work will focus on the perceptions and experiences of persons living with dementia and their cares when interacting with diagnostic and therapy radiography practitioners and department. This may help to strengthen or produce new recommendations or resources for supporting radiography practitioners and students in the clinical setting.

References

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