



Radiographers' Perceptions of Patients Care Needs During a Computed Tomography Examination

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to describe the radiographers' perceptions of the patient care that is needed by the latter undergoing a computed tomography (CT) examination. The study was conducted using phenomenography methodology. Eight female and four male radiographers were interviewed at three radiology departments in central Sweden. The radiographers highlighted that the patients' need for information regarding the whole examination was important for them to understand the procedure. The radiographers' perception was that the time required for a CT examination needs to be adjusted so that there is sufficient time for individualized patient care, while at the same time taking into account the patient's age and illness. There was also a need for the examination to be carried out by a knowledgeable professional radiographer. In conclusion, this study shows that patients are in need of good communication, information, physical/psychological care, and individualized adapted examination time. Radiographers' knowledge and ability to understand patients' needs have a significant impact if patients are involved in their examination. (*J Radiol Nurs* 2014;33:206-213.)

KEYWORDS: Communication; Patient care; Radiology; Radiographer; X-ray examination.

INTRODUCTION

In Sweden, approximately 5.4 million X-ray examinations are performed every year, of which 20% are computed tomography (CT) examinations. In 2010, 85 of every 1,000 people in Sweden underwent a CT examination ([The Swedish Radiation Protection Authority, 2012](#)). During an X-ray examination, the radiographers are responsible for the patient care ([Competence Description for Licensed Radiographers, 2011](#)). The patients' right to health care is regulated in The Swedish

Parliament, Swedish provisions, Health and care law (Hälsa- och Sjukvårdslagen, HSL). The HSL provides a framework for health care services and stipulates that care given should be of good quality and good hygienic standard, and patients' needs should be met during care and treatment. When it comes to information, the act states that "the patient should be given individually tailored information about their state of health during care, treatment, and examinations" ([The Swedish Parliament, Swedish Provisions, Health and Care Law, 1982; 763 s1, 1992](#)).

The competence description for radiographers ([Competence Description for Licensed Radiographers, 2011](#)) points out that they should have the ability to observe and respond to patients' specific patient care needs during X-ray examinations. Radiographers should also pay attention to whether the patients are experiencing pain and/or discomfort and try to minimize it ([Competence Description for Licensed Radiographers, 2011](#)).

The radiographer's professional role is multifaceted and demands evidence-based care, a scientific approach, multicultural competence, and professional knowledge. Patient care is an essential element of the radiographers'

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work in the high-tech environment ([Competence Description for Licensed Radiographers, 2011](#)). The professional code of ethics for radiographers (Professional ethics code for radiographers in Sweden) describes them to respect and protect the privacy of patients while preserving their dignity during all examinations and treatments. It is also the radiographers' responsibility to provide information and support in conjunction with examinations and treatments ([Professional Ethics Code for Radiographers, 2008](#)).

In recent years, the radiographers' tasks have changed with the transition from analog to digital technology. The introduction of Picture Archiving and Communication System together with the introduction of new IT systems and evolving technology have led to an increase in the volume of X-ray image production. Radiographers also have the responsibility to assess the images and have thus taken on increased responsibility, resulting in increased work stress ([Fridell, Aspelin, Edgren, Lindsköld, & Lundberg, 2009](#); [Larsson, Lundberg, & Hillegård, 2009](#)).

The CT examinations are performed as emergencies or as scheduled examinations and are performed either with or without oral/intravenous administration of contrast media. The purpose of administration of oral and/or intravenous contrast media via a central vein catheter, port-à-cath, or peripheral venous catheter must be explained to the patients before the start of the examination ([Aspelin, 2008](#)). Patients are asked to change into a hospital gown, and all metal objects are removed to reduce artifacts on the images. Patients with acute conditions, however, can be examined with their clothes on if necessary. The patients lie on a narrow X-ray table during the examination and are instructed by a radiographer through a loudspeaker. During imaging, the patient is alone inside the room and is asked to lie still and to hold his/her breath at times. Patient movement during the examination can cause blurry images ([Medical Advising in Östergötland, 2012](#)).

There are several studies concerning patients' needs that show a gap in information in conjunction with various imaging examinations. These studies also show that the high-tech environment created anxiety and fear about the procedure ([Murphy, 2000](#); [Törnqvist, Månsson, Larsson, & Hallström, 2006](#)). Good communication and information can reduce patients' anxiety and fear and thus facilitate the examination ([Andersson, Fridlund, Elgan, & Axelsson, 2008](#); [Murphy, 2000](#); [Törnqvist et al., 2006](#)). Patients also need support during the examination and this should be based on the patient's individual needs ([Törnqvist et al., 2006](#)). After the examination is completed, the outcome of the examination is also a cause of anxiety and fear, and therefore the patients should be informed

about how long it will take before the results are available and whom they should contact to get this information ([Johnson, Easterling, Williams, Glover, & Frankel, 2009](#); [Murphy, 2000](#)). Patient communication can vary depending on whether the examination is acute or scheduled. The radiographer should take into account the patient's age, sickness, and previous experience of X-ray examinations ([Booth, 2008](#); [Booth and Manning, 2006](#)). Information about the examination can be conducted through different channels, that is, written information when scheduling the examination, visual information in the form of a video, and/or oral information before the examination. Studies have shown that patients who have received written information before the examination, possibly combined with slideshows/tapes, were mentally better prepared, had less pain and anxiety, and were more involved than those who only received written information ([Bolejko, Sarvik, Hagell, & Brinck, 2008](#); [Hjelm-Karlsson, 1989](#)).

During the examination, the radiographer should tend to the patient's needs by paying attention to the patient's concerns and listening to him/her. The radiographer should also provide comfort by showing that he/she is near at hand. A trusting and safe environment is created by giving patients individually tailored support. The patient's previous experience and ability to relax are of great importance and have a bearing on how well they can handle the situation. With the help of good communication, information, and an explanation of the sequence of events, the patient has a better understanding of the procedure and can be guided through the examination, thereby maximizing the patient's own participation ([Andersson et al., 2008](#); [Chesson, Mc Kenzie, & Mathers, 2002](#); [O'Connor & Butler, 1999](#)).

Previous studies have been primarily carried out from a patient's perspective where patients have expressed a need for information and support during the examination ([Chesson et al., 2002](#); [Johnson et al., 2009](#); [Murphy, 2000](#); [Törnqvist et al., 2006](#)). How radiographers perceive patients' health care needs during X-ray examinations has been only sparsely studied.

The aim of the present study was to describe the radiographers' perceptions of the patient care that is needed by patients undergoing a CT examination.

METHOD

To describe radiographers' perceptions of patients' care needs during CT examinations, interviews were conducted and analyzed with the phenomenographic qualitative method.

Phenomenography describes both similarities and differences in perception in the light of the respondent's background ([Marton & Booth, 2008](#)).

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