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Do general radiographic examinations resemble a person-centred environment?

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ABSTRACT

Aim and objective: It is argued whether general radiographic examinations adhere to a person-centred approach within the direct digital radiography (DDR) environment. General radiographic examinations continue to increase and constitute approximately 90% of all examinations undertaken in the clinical environment. This study explored the potential impact patients experience whilst undergoing general imaging examinations.

Method: An ethnographic methodology provided insight of two general radiography environments in the United Kingdom (UK) using participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Findings: The findings highlighted an 'in and out' culture whereby patients are 'hurried' and 'rushed' out of X-ray rooms in response to increasing time pressures experienced by diagnostic radiographers. In addition, this study challenged that patients may begin to rank 'speed' and 'waiting times' above other elements of radiographic care thus presenting new challenges for radiographers within the clinical environment.

Conclusion: It is asserted that radiographers should remain holistic healthcare professionals and not begin to resemble operators on the production line. Further, it challenges whether patients are beginning to rank aspects of radiographic care within contemporary practices.

Advances in knowledge: Few studies have explored the radiographer–patient relationship within the DDR environment, yet this study provides insight of person-centred practices within contemporary practices.

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Introduction

This article challenges whether general radiographic practices adhere to person-centred care (PCC) within the direct digital radiography (DDR) environment. Diagnostic radiographers require an understanding of advancing technology and radiological physics to acquire images of diagnostic quality, yet radiographers also require the professional and social skills to interact and care for their patients.^{1,2} PCC is often advocated within healthcare but the terminology refers to many different principles and activities, with no single definition. Four generally accepted definitions of PCC are cited by The Health Foundation, which include; 1) affording people dignity, compassion and respect; 2) offering coordinated care, support or treatment; 3) offering personalised care, support or treatment and 4) supporting people to recognise and develop their

own strengths and abilities to enable them to live independent and fulfilling lives.³ This approach is instilled within the National Health Service (NHS) Constitution, supported by key principles and values underpinning the rights of patients (public and staff).⁴

The practice of PCC is generally accepted amongst authors. Frank⁵ is of the opinion that PCC is the king of care promoting patient capabilities, which are a subset of human capability whereby the patient is treated as a person. In nursing, PCC is associated with nurses listening to a person's story, engaging with them in meaningful dialogue, recognising them as human beings with dignity and honour in their unique beliefs and values.^{6,7} The findings presented in this study represent one category (of four) 'quicker exams vs. in and out culture', within a theme (of four) 'patient care delivery', which was part of a larger study and identified by Fig. 1 (p.8).

Few studies have explored socio-cultural and radiographer–patient interactions within the general radiography environment. This is important to consider because prior experiences and workplace cultures can hinder patient care practices.^{8,9} Increases in

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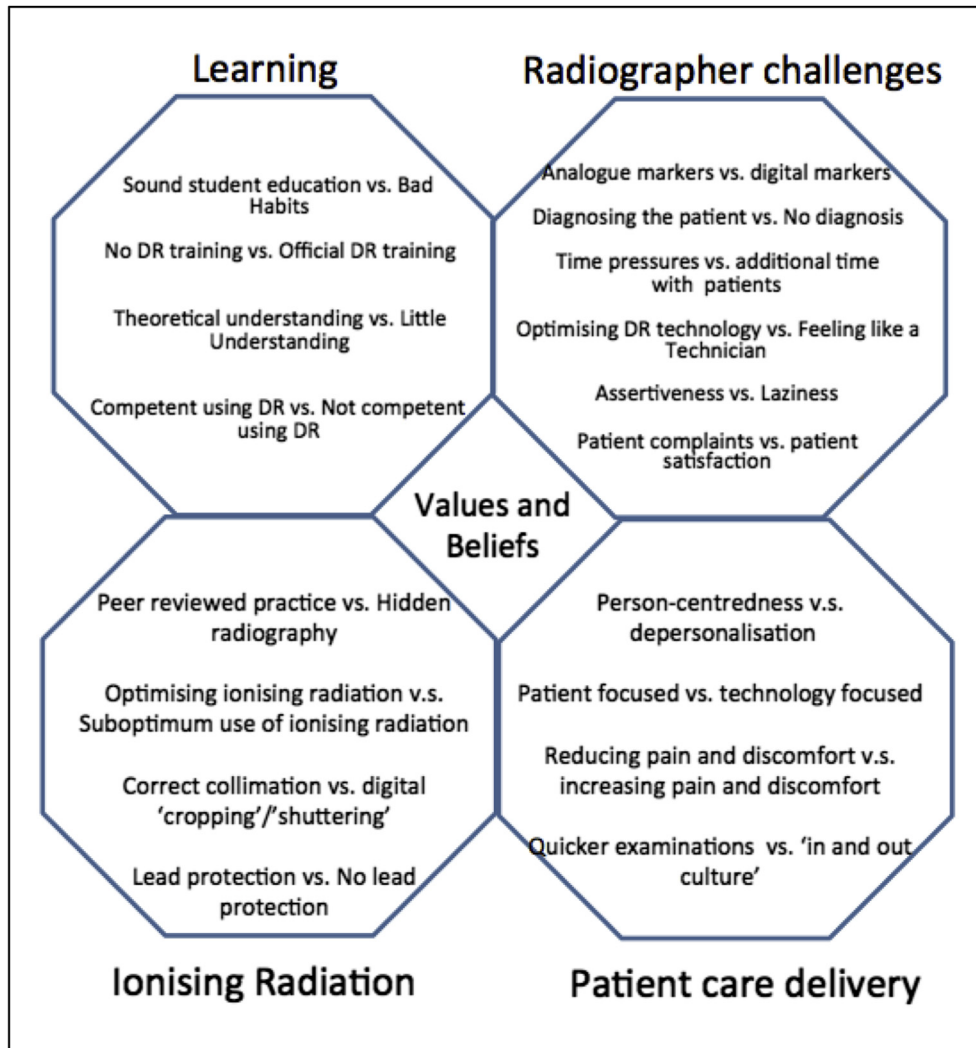


Figure 1. Depiction of culture within the diagnostic radiography environment.

hours and pace of work have been reported to impact nursing staff whereby treatment begins to resemble a production line¹⁰ and may similarly resonate with diagnostic radiographers within the general radiography environment.¹¹ It is generally accepted that advances in radiographic technology have enhanced patient satisfaction.¹² Evidence highlights that advances in technology now offer patients faster image acquisition, easy availability, excellent image resolution and lower radiation dose.¹³ The rationale to explore PCC within general radiography is supported by Murphy¹⁴ suggesting that there is limited evidence of radiographic practices in the United Kingdom (UK). In response, this study offers readers original insight into an imaging modality that constitutes approximately 90% of all imaging examinations undertaken clinically.¹⁵ Importantly this study may resonate with radiographic departments nationally and/or internationally enabling hospital managers and staff to critically reflect on current PCC approaches in contemporary practices.

The study sought to question whether DDR impacts on the delivery of PCC within the general radiography environment. The aim was to explore general radiography practices and radiographer-patient interactions during DDR examinations. The objectives of the study were to 1) review radiographic literature to ensure the research question and design added to existing knowledge; 2)

inductively explore radiographer-patient interactions during DDR examinations; 3) collect and analyse qualitative data and incorporate into the existing evidence base.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used exploring PCC within the DDR environment. Ethnography was the methodology employed providing original insight into radiographic practices underexplored within the UK.^{16,17} This study offers original insight by exploring PCC practices within the X-ray room using advancing technology.^{18,19} The methods include:

- 1) Participant observation: Observing contemporary radiographic practices and the radiographer-patient relationship.
- 2) Semi-structured interviews: Explored key themes from participant observations uncovering 'what had been seen and discussed informally' in relation to PCC.

Ethnography provides thick descriptions of behaviour belonging to specific groups and individuals within a culture.^{20,21} Saks and Alsop²² assert that ethnography is important to professional groups seeking an understanding of the behaviours, attitudes and practices

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