

SHORT PAPER SESSION J2

J2.1 Supporting undergraduate radiography students with dyslexia in clinical practice

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Background

Wider participation policies in the higher education sector have increased the number of neurodivergent students, including those with dyslexia, being admitted to healthcare professional training courses. Despite this increase, there remains a lack of radiography-specific research on supporting students with dyslexia in clinical placements. Existing literature highlights the challenges dyslexic students face, including anxiety, bias and practical assessment difficulties. The absence of radiography-specific research means current support methods in radiography are potentially generic and may lack applicability to the radiography clinical environment.

Aim

This study aims to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of radiographers in supporting students with dyslexia in clinical placement.

Method

An online Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey was distributed via social media platforms. A free-text section was included in the KAP survey to collect qualitative comments from participants. The KAP survey responses were coded to calculate scores for knowledge, attitude, and practice separately. Statistical testing was undertaken, and thematic analysis of the free-text comments was conducted to uncover themes.

Findings

Radiographers in this study have a 'good' level of knowledge on dyslexia's impacts, along with an overall positive attitude towards supporting students with dyslexia in clinical placement. However, the practice of support and implementing reasonable adjustments appears to be highly varied. The thematic analysis found three main themes: Awareness, Understanding, and Support.

Implications for future practice

This study shows that there is a need and desire for further training and support for student supervisors/mentors to address variable support practices.

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J2.2 Lived realities of Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse students in therapeutic radiography education – findings from a mixed methods study

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Background

Students from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse (BAED) backgrounds are reported to experience challenges in higher education (HE) which are not present for white students. These include racism, low levels of belonging and a lack of inclusive curriculum. These factors are implicated in the awarding gap, where a 10.7% reduced chance of obtaining a 2.1-degree classification or higher is evidenced for BAED students (Advance HE, 2023). Equitable, positive experiences are crucial for the retention and progression of students to support individual success and the development of the therapeutic radiography (TR) workforce.

Method

A 3-phase sequential explanatory mixed-method design was used, grounded in an interpretivist paradigm. 35 students from eight UK HEIs took part in a quantitative survey, followed by two online focus groups (N=8 students) and individual interviews (N=7 students). Ethical approval was granted by the university, with consent confirmed before participation. Descriptive statistics and thematic reflective analysis were used to analyse the data.

Results

Students recounted experiences of racism, microaggressions and incivility, developing strategies to negotiate the clinical placement environment. Microaggressions were experienced to a lesser degree in the university setting, but students reported generally positive interactions with lecturers and peers. Despite challenges in their experiences, optimism and determination to make positive change as future qualified TRs were seen.

Conclusion

An antiracist agenda is critical in radiotherapy education to eliminate racist incidents, develop allyship and support inclusive clinical practice. Initiatives which develop belonging in university and clinical placement are vital to support learning and 'good' degree outcomes.

Advance HE (2023) Equality and Higher Education, Student statistical report 2023. Advance HE. Accessed online at: <https://advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/equality-higher-education-statistical-reports-2023>.

J2.4 A diary study into diagnostic radiography students' first clinical placement experiences

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Clinical placement is a vital part of Diagnostic Radiography training however, initial experiences of clinical departments can cause a "Reality shock" in healthcare students that has been associated with student attrition and delayed professional development (7).

While prospective Radiographers are recommended to undertake a pre-enrolment clinical department visit, post-pandemic pressures mean many imaging departments no longer offer these (9). As such, students may experience clinical environments for the first time in their initial placement. As placement time is limited, students need to make the most of their placement to develop professionally. However, lack of preparation and the shock of transitioning into practice have been highlighted in delaying professional development and increasing attrition rates, alongside challenges such as witnessing suffering, difficult situations and unclear expectations (2,4–6,10).

To better understand contemporary experiences of transition into placement, we invited the 1st year cohort of a UK undergraduate Diagnostic Radiography course to record diaries of their first placement. Diary studies allow highly credible and contemporaneous recording of events and feelings from respondents in their own words (1,8). Six students were recruited and completed anonymous weekly entries across their first 4-week placement, alongside an abridged Clance Impostor Phenomenon (CIPS) scale (3).

Through thematic analysis (currently underway) we aim to identify commonalities of students' experiences, to adapt pre-clinical education to better address student needs and improve transition into the clinical role. By better preparation via simulation and pre-clinical education we intend to ease clinical transition and allow students to develop professionally sooner while reducing attrition.

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J2.5 Exploring radiography students' perspectives on infection prevention and control education - a nominal group technique study

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Introduction

Infection prevention and control (IPC) education is a core component of healthcare training, including radiography programs. However, previous research suggests that radiography students often demonstrate inconsistent understanding of IPC principles and variable application during clinical placement. This study aimed to explore radiography students' perceptions of their infection control education and identify strategies to better prepare them for clinical practice.

Methods

A qualitative study employing the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was conducted with 12 undergraduate radiography students. The structured NGT process enabled participants to generate, discuss, and rank ideas related to their IPC learning experiences and effective teaching approaches. Data were analysed descriptively, with emphasis placed on consensus based priorities identified through the ranking process.

Results

Participants reported a disconnect between theoretical IPC instruction and its practical application within radiography contexts. Students identified limited opportunities to practice and receive feedback on IPC skills prior to placement. Student suggested recommendations included embedding infection control principles into existing practical classes, simulation based learning, and practical assessments. Students believed this approach would normalise IPC as part of routine radiographic practice and support the development of correct habits across modalities before being exposed to varied practice in clinical settings.

Discussion

The findings emphasise the value of practice focused and assessment aligned IPC education in improving student confidence and readiness for clinical placement. Integrating IPC into practical teaching may promote early habit formation and support adherence during placement, even when suboptimal practices are observed. The use of NGT yielded actionable curriculum insights for radiography educators.
