
Teach Me, Train Me, Help my Patient: Using e-Learning in Radiotherapy



Researchers from the Clatterbridge Cancer Centre, University of Liverpool and Lancashire Teaching Hospitals presented results from a study on “Use of an e-learning Tool to Increase Therapeutic Radiographer Knowledge and Awareness regarding Information Giving on the Late Effects of Pelvic Radiotherapy” at the Annual Radiotherapy and Oncology Meeting of the British Institute of Radiology (BIR) from 17 to 19 March 2021.

The late effects (LEs) of pelvic radiotherapy are hugely detrimental to patients’ quality of life. Moreover, it appears that therapeutic radiographers are lacking in knowledge, awareness and confidence when it comes to LEs, thereby underlining the need for training. E-learning methods seemed to be the method of choice. The aim of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of a novel, interactive e-learning intervention to address these gaps and to change perceptions of their responsibility in providing such information to patients.

Carried out over 12 months, within a single radiotherapy institution, 27 therapeutic radiographers participated in the study. Participants received flexible, asynchronous access to the “Blended Learning” portal via the Trust. To measure levels of staff knowledge, confidence, perceptions and awareness, participants completed Likert-scale questionnaires and participated in focus groups before and after training. To obtain qualitative and quantitative results, thematic and statistical analysis was carried out using a Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

A thematic analysis of the focus group responses (before and after) showed a marked increase in knowledge, awareness, confidence and perceptions. During the interviews, a number of key themes became apparent such as consent, knowledge, confidence, professional responsibility, gaps within practice and time/space. However, there is a need for further training using blended pedagogical methods to ensure long-term increases in staff confidence when discussing LEs with patients. Following the e-learning, participants recognised their personal and professional responsibility to educate patients on LEs.

Based on the findings of the study, local and national recommendations were sent to the institution, Higher Education institutions and policy makers. In short, the interactive e-learning tool developed especially for this study proved to be successful and opens up more possibilities for the future.

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