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By Editor-in-Chief Prof. Iain McCall

Dear Readers,

Imaging departments are an essential component of the patient's journey and may cross the patient's path during many stages of their care. This interaction may be relatively straightforward, involving only limited resources or may be complex, requiring input from a number of members of the department and using a variety of equipment. The department's workload is substantially influenced by external forces and the delivery of the imaging service is time sensitive, with considerable financial implications.

The workforce has varying levels of training and skills that are interdependent, the majority of which are required on a 24/7 basis. The delivery of a high quality service for the patient and the referring doctors requires all members of staff to work as a team. For a team to work efficiently, there must be mutual respect regardless of the level of complexity of the individual's tasks, as each can affect the quality and efficiency of the department. Examples are multiple, from disorganisation in portering affecting the workflow, poor cleaning increasing infection rates, poor quality imaging, reducing diagnostic accuracy and failure of 24/7 service due to rota difficulties and sickness.

Good teamwork does not happen by chance. It requires recognition by all concerned that they are working for the patient rather than themselves and that a high quality of care must be the driving force. It also requires good leadership in all levels of the department, not just at the top. In professional organisations like imaging departments, front line staff, by virtue of their training and specialist knowledge, have a large measure of control over the delivery of the service and generally have a greater influence over decision-making on a day-to-day basis than staff in a formal position of authority.

Thus, leadership in imaging departments has two primary functions. The first is to ensure that the day-to-day operations are working efficiently, which requires organisational and management skills. The second is to ensure that the organisation is delivering a high quality of care, is interacting productively with other departments at a clinical level and is constantly evolving and embracing new ideas.

Leadership at this level requires negotiation and persuasion, which may often be informal, to ensure cooperation and support of clinicians. Leadership for this requires vision, tact and often a degree of persistence in order to achieve support for change. This edition of the journal has its focus on leadership and teamwork, the importance of which has long been understood in imaging but has, until now, had a lower profile in some areas of the wider healthcare community.

Prof. Iain McCall

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