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**SHORT PAPER SESSION F2****F2.1 Enhanced level practice: Understanding the current landscape in radiography**

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**Background**

Enhanced level practice in radiography bridges the gap between foundation and advanced practice, those working at this level contribute to patient care and service improvement, clinical safety and staff development.<sup>1</sup> The CHEERs project sought to socialise the awareness and understanding of enhanced practice across the radiography profession in the UK. This presentation reports on the survey element of the larger project which was commissioned and funded by NHSE.

**Methods**

To gain a baseline of data on current awareness of the enhanced level two parallel online mixed method surveys were undertaken across managers and practitioners. Open for 8 weeks in Summer 2024 responses were collated through the online platform (Jisc). Closed and open questions enabled understanding, perceptions and myths to be collated.

**Results**

Overall 552 responses were received and 67.5% of diagnostic and 76.2% of therapeutic radiographers had heard of enhanced practice. However, only 30.3% of respondents reported that there had been discussion in their organisation. This confirms that the adoption in practice is lacking with only 34.4% being aware of the appropriate scope of practice of an individual working at an enhanced level. Other answers confirm that there is confusion on the appropriate educational level and the differences between enhanced and advanced practice.

**Conclusion**

The survey provided information on the misconceptions and confidence levels of the radiography community on enhanced practice which has further informed the development of resources and training to socialise enhanced practice in radiography.

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1. The College of Radiographers. (2022) Education and Career Framework for the Radiography Workforce (4th edition) <https://www.sor.org/getmedia/b2f6bf07-668f-4155-950a-b9d96c48eae1/12604-CoR-ECF-Interactive-v9a> [Accessed 09/02/2025]

**F2.2 The Imaging Support Workforce: "Without them there wouldn't be a service at all"**

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**Background**

Diagnostic imaging services face a long-standing workforce crisis.<sup>1,2</sup> A strategy being used to combat this crisis is skill mix,<sup>3</sup> however, little is known about the deployment and utilisation of Support Workers and Assistant Practitioners (SWAP) within diagnostic imaging,<sup>4</sup> a key workforce in the application of skill mix. This study explored stakeholder perceptions regarding SWAP roles and responsibilities, contribution to service provision, and career progression.

**Methods**

Using a case study approach, semi-structured interviews (n=38, service/modality leads) and focus groups (n=15, SWAPs) were completed across nine NHS Trusts in England. Sampling was purposive, aiming for representative diversity in SWAP utilisation levels and geographical spread. Data analysis involved thematic analysis within and across cases.

**Results**

Four themes emerged: (1) operational efficiency and service impact, where SWAPs were critical in optimising workflows and service delivery; (2) roles and responsibilities, with noted role clarity but some ambiguity leading to role strain; (3) career progression, support, and training, highlighting opportunities yet significant barriers to advancement; and (4) workforce dynamics and job satisfaction, where high job satisfaction contrasted with challenges in role stability and professional recognition.

**Conclusion**

SWAPs substantially enhance imaging service delivery, providing crucial operational support and patient interaction. Despite this, there is a lack of role clarity and career progression for SWAPs that can impact on inherently high job satisfaction. Rotation of support workers can address some service needs, whereas static deployment enhances consistency, team dynamics and job satisfaction. The findings advocate for a structured framework to guide the implementation of effective practice models.

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1. The Royal College of Radiologists. Clinical Radiology workforce census 2023 report. London: The Royal College of Radiologists June; 2024. <https://www.rcr.ac.uk/media/5befglss/rcr-census-clinical-radiology-workforce-census-2023.pdf>; 06.02.25.  
2. Society of Radiographers. Diagnostic radiography workforce UK census. <https://www.sor.org/getmedia/6994cd5d-0155-4a7e-a8a7-32a9bbda81c3/DiagnosticRadiography-Workforce-UK-Census-2022-report.pdf>; 2022. 06.02.25.  
3. Radiography Skills Mix. A Report on the Four-Tier Service Delivery Model. (2003), Department of Health. London

4. Snaith B, Etty S, Nightingale J. Has the skills mix promise been broken? A scoping review of the support and assistant workforce in diagnostic imaging. *Radiography* 2024;30:1468-73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.radi.2024.08.006>.
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## F2.3 “Making it work in the face of extreme adversity” - Exploring perceptions for the future of the imaging and oncology workforce using ‘soundbite’ interviews

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### Background

Public demand and scrutiny, an aging population, inefficient funding and the legacy of Covid-19 are just some of the challenges our health service faces.<sup>1,2</sup> In imaging and oncology, there has been an exponential growth in service need against a workforce which is struggling to recruit and retain.<sup>2,3</sup> This project explored what the workforce perceive the main opportunities and solutions, threats and risks are.

### Method

Very short structured ‘soundbite’ interviews were employed to capture brief opinions or ‘snippets’ of dialogue. Participants recruited at an imaging and oncology congress were asked what they considered the most significant opportunity/solution and threat/risk related to the future workforce. Descriptive and content analysis was undertaken to provide evaluation of frequency of themes.

### Results

88 ‘soundbite’ interviews were undertaken lasting between 30 seconds and four minutes in length. The most common themes relating to opportunities/solutions considered education and students, workforce development and skill mix, and the use of technology. The most common threats/risks were identified as a lack of support for the workforce, recruitment and retention, national strategic issues, and barriers to workforce development.

### Conclusion

The workforce perceives a greater number of threats/risks for the future than potential opportunities/solutions. In particular, burnout and staff attrition were the most frequent perceptions of risk, though role development was often highlighted as the biggest opportunity. Interestingly AI and technology were frequently considered both opportunity and threat. This study highlights a lot needs to be done to support our future workforce and make best use of potential opportunities and solutions.

1. NHS England. (2023). NHS long term workforce plan. NHS England, England.
  2. Elliott J, Hodges C, Boots M, Pattinson R, Gillen E, Whybrow D, Bundy C (2024). Mixed shift rotations, sleep, burnout and well-being in professions similar to radiographers: a systematic review. *Radiography* 30, 1194-1200
  3. Nightingale J, Burton M, Appleyard R, Sevens T, Campbell S. (2021). Retention of radiographers: a qualitative exploration of factors influencing decisions to leave or remain within the NHS. *Radiography*. 27(3):795-802
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## F2.4 Do reporting radiographers understand the difference between the enhanced and advanced levels of practice?

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### Background

The enhanced level of practice was introduced into NHS terminology in 2019<sup>1</sup> and into the radiography career framework in 2022.<sup>2</sup> Yet there is inherent confusion and inconsistent alignment of the levels within practice exacerbated by differing educational achievements, capabilities and scopes of practice.<sup>3</sup> This abstract reports on the online survey element of a multiphase College of Radiographers Industry Partnership Scheme (CoRIPS) funded project aiming to understand the perceptions of those in this field.

### Method

An electronic survey was distributed in autumn 2024. The eligibility for participation included UK trainee or qualified reporting radiographers working in projectional radiography. Closed and open questions were utilised.

### Results

188 unique eligible responses were received, including 14 (7.4%) from current trainees. 66.5% of respondents indicated they understood the difference between the enhanced and advanced levels. For those already independently reporting highest qualifications varied from PgCert to PhD. Based on self-defined level of practice they identified as practitioner (1.7%), enhanced (46.0%), advanced (42.0%) and consultant (5.7%). There was a significant link between highest qualification and self-defined level ( $p < .05$ ). Of the 86 who defined themselves at the enhanced level, one fifth had the term ‘advanced’ in their job title. 84.5% of respondents are being paid at Agenda for Change band 7 although 10 were on a split pay band, higher when reporting.

## Conclusion

Despite the majority of survey respondents stating their understanding of the different levels of practice the application of the levels into practice is inconsistent and confusing for practitioners and patients.

1. Leary A. Enhanced Practice. Health Education England. 2019.
2. College of Radiographers. Education and Career Framework. College of Radiographers, London. 2022
3. Murphy L, Nightingale J, Calder P. Difficulties associated with reporting radiographer working practices—a narrative evidence synthesis. Radiography. 2022; 28: 1101–1109.

## F2.5 An evaluation of the clinical factors impacting the psychological wellbeing of diagnostic radiographers in the UK

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### Background

Care and compassion are fundamental components underpinning healthcare practice. Evidence suggests that healthcare practitioners witnessing the suffering of others may result in emotional reactions impacting upon their ability to demonstrate empathy and compassion (Sabo, 2006). Diagnostic radiographers are often overlooked as a profession when evaluating compassion and interaction with patients due to the perceived solely technical aspects of their role (Robertson et al., 2022). This qualitative research aimed to explore the psychological effects of clinical radiography practice on radiographers in the UK.

### Method

The data was generated through in-depth one-to-one semi-structured interviews with twenty-three radiography practitioners working in the UK. Participants were recruited through the research teams' professional networks, the Society of Radiographers Live and via the UKIO Congress 2024 Research Hub. The collated anonymised and transcribed data was analysed using iterative thematic analysis.

### Results

The analysis generated four themes pertaining to the remit of radiography practice influences on radiographers' psychological wellbeing: 'role perception and normalisation', 'trauma and burnout', 'support networks', and 'training needs.' These themes provide meaningful insights into the current status of radiography practice and its potential psychological impacts from the radiographers' perspective.

### Conclusion

The four themes suggest that there can be detrimental effects on the psychological wellbeing of radiographers in carrying out their clinical roles. Improved pre and post graduate education together with the addressing of radiographers' role perceptions and expectations is needed to enhance and maintain radiographers' wellbeing in clinical practice.

1. Robertson, S., Olanloye, E.E., Hon, Y., England, A., McNair, H., Cruikshank, S. (2022) Are Radiographers suffering from symptoms of compassion fatigue due to occupational stress: A systematic review. Radiography; 28(3): 857-864.
2. Sabo, B.M. (2006) Compassion fatigue and nursing work: Can we accurately capture the consequences of caring work? International Journal of Nursing Practice: 12(3): 136-142.

## F2.6 Occupational stress and mental wellbeing: A qualitative exploration of migrant sonographers working in the UK

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### Background

Occupational stress (OS) and burnout are prevalent in healthcare, including ultrasound. These challenges are exacerbated by staff shortages, increasing workload, and ageing population growth, leading to a growing reliance on ultrasound for diagnosis. In the UK, migrant sonographers fill critical staffing gaps but face unique work-related stressors that impact their well-being and mental health. This study explored the experiences and perspectives of migrant sonographers practising in the UK regarding OS and well-being.

### Method

Ethical approval was obtained (HRS-2024-ECYBI). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 HCPC-registered migrant sonographers across ten regions in the UK who had experienced OS. These interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically using NVivo software. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed.

### Findings

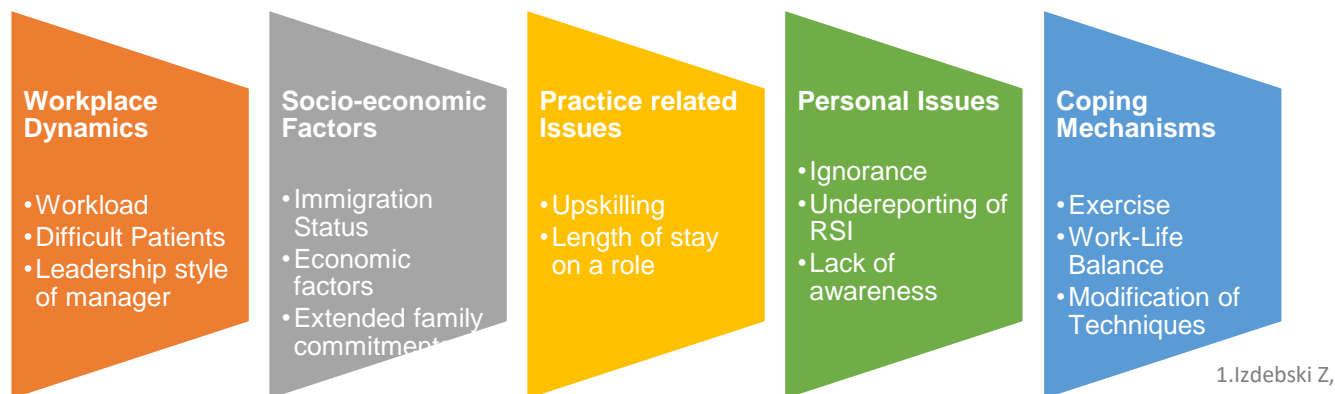
Five major themes were developed: workplace dynamics, socioeconomic factors, practice-related factors, personal issues and coping mechanisms. Primary sources of stress identified were workload, difficult patients, managerial/leadership

challenges, immigration issues, and lack of awareness of the procedure for reporting repetitive stress injury (RSI) and work-related stress.

## Conclusion

The findings highlight unique stressors associated with migrant sonographers that negatively impact their mental/physical well-being and performance. Thus, emphasising the need for inclusive managerial approaches and culturally tailored support systems. Customised onboarding, stress management training, and RSI reporting protocols can enhance well-being, job satisfaction, and retention.

Implications for practice: Healthcare institutions must address the unique needs of migrant practitioners. Culturally competent onboarding programs and ongoing support systems should be prioritised to foster a resilient and satisfied workforce.



Białorudzki M, Dec-Pietrowska J, Mazur J. Occupational burnout in healthcare workers, stress, and other symptoms of work overload during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Poland. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2023 Jan 30;20(3):2428. doi: 10.3390/ijerph20032428. PMID: 36767797; PMCID: PMC9916221.

2.Simona, Dobešová, Cakirpaloglu., Panajotis, Cakirpaloglu., Ondřej, Skopal., Barbora, Kvapilová., Tereza, Schováňková., Šárka, Vévodová., Jane, Greaves., Alison, Steven. 2. Strain and serenity: exploring the interplay of stress, burnout, and well-being among healthcare professionals. *Frontiers in Psychology*, (2024). doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1415996