

UK reporting radiographers: Limitations on practice

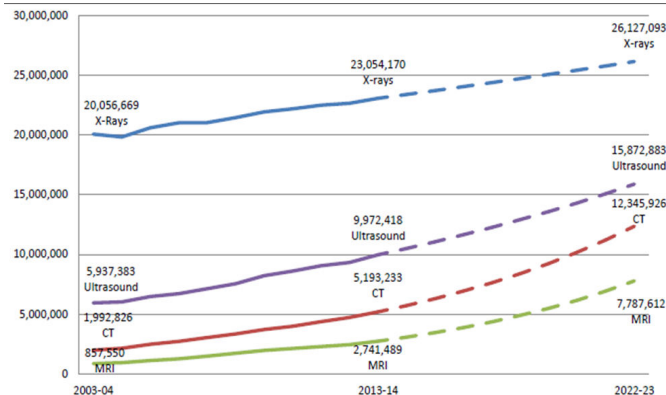
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Introduction

Year-on-year increases in radiology workloads pose a significant challenge; the reporting of plain-radiographs by radiographers offers a viable and cost-effective alternative to traditional systems.

Radiographer reporting of plain-radiographs has been widely embraced in the UK, however implementation and utilisation varies hugely between individuals and employers. Evidence suggests that many reporting radiographers have limitations on their practice.



Method

Radiographers employed to provide a definitive written report on plain radiographs were invited to complete an online survey.

In April 2015, letters were posted to every acute NHS trust in the UK, with a response timeframe of six weeks. Information was sought regarding demographics, geographical location, and scope of practice.

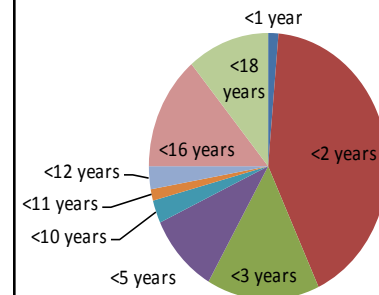
Results

259 responses were received; representing approximately 35% of the population of UK reporting radiographers. 50.4% (n=126/250) had limitations applied to their reporting practice.

73.0% (n=92/126) of all limitations are related to age. The most common ages prohibited from reporting were <2yrs (41.3%), <3yrs (15.2%), <16yrs (14.1%) and <18yrs (10.9%).

29.4% (n=37/126) of respondents have limitations on clinical history, most commonly on reporting non-trauma (37.8% n=14/37) and not reporting radiographs that show orthopaedic prostheses (18.9% n=7/37).

Limitations by patient age



Anatomical scope	No. (%)
Appendicular	255 (98.5)
Axial	208 (80.3)
Chest	39 (15.1)
Abdomen	20 (7.7)

Referral scope	No. (%)
ED	255 (98.8)
Primary care (including GP)	154 (59.7)
Outpatient	153 (59.3)
Inpatient	145 (56.2)

32.7% (n=84/257) regularly attend multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meetings. The most commonly attended meetings are; ED/trauma/orthopaedic (44.0% n=37/84), rheumatology (20.2% n=17/84) and radiology (11.9% n=10/84). Other MDT meetings attended include chest, paediatric, musculoskeletal, dual x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) and tuberculosis (TB). The majority of respondents (80.0% n=48/60) attend MDT meetings at least once a month, with 53.3% (n=32/60) attending at least once a week.

Conclusion

Limitations on radiographer practice are common; there is a lack of consistency in reporting practice across the UK, with a postcode lottery of roles and patient pathways. Most reporting radiographers have limitations on their practice, and these do not appear to be based on latest evidence.

In view of the well-documented backlogs of plain-film radiographs in the UK, it would be prudent to remove limitations that aren't based on best-evidence, to allow reporting radiographers to further contribute to reducing pressures on radiology departments.

Further information

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Milner RC, Culpan G, Snaith B. (2016) Radiographer reporting in the UK: Is the current scope of practice limiting reporting capacity? British Journal of Radiology.

Milner RC, Snaith B. (2016) Are Reporting Radiographers fulfilling the role of Advanced Practitioner? Radiography.