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The future of ultrasound Advanced Clinical Practitioner education: Mapping the views of programme leads in the UK

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Background: The apparatus presently involved in ultrasound Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) education, at UK University Level 7, is in need of radical change to adapt to the challenges of a healthcare environment in extraordinary flux (Sloane and Miller, 2017).

These challenges are, furthermore, exacerbated by an overall shortage of sonographers that is increasingly proving to be damaging to both patient service and practitioner wellbeing, albeit in a highly uneven manner across the country (Miller et al., 2019; Waring et al., 2018). The research reported herein, funded by Health Education England, explores the views of UK ultrasound programme leads regarding the facility of current educational strategies for addressing contemporary troubles in clinical ultrasound, and the adaptations that are likely necessary to render ultrasound education in higher education fit-for-purpose in coming years.

Methods: With institutional ethical approval, semi-structured interviews were conducted with N=10 ultrasound leads in UK universities. All data were transcribed verbatim, and corollary transcripts analysed using the thematic approach described by Braun and Clarke (2008).

Results: Four Global Themes emerged from the analysis. (1) Managing students' current ability to flexibly interpret clinical guidelines for everyday practice. (2) Highlighting students' own accountability in ongoing professional development. (3) Foregrounding the importance of "soft skills" in learning. (4) Foregrounding the importance of teamwork across clinical disciplines.

Conclusion: While the participants were generally content with current *standards* of Ultrasound ACP education, they also voiced a range of extant issues, born of recent experience, that might inform future curriculum adaptations to changing healthcare contexts.

References

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