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Managing the initial transition from student to professional radiographer: Making induction and preceptorship count

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Background: Today, increased marketisation of the higher education (HE) and health sectors requires that students in allied healthcare disciplines make an almost instantaneous shift upon qualification from a consumer identity to that of service provider, with a range of sharp corollary impacts upon their senses of self and accountability (Sloane and Miller, 2017). In these terms, how the earliest days of post-qualification employment are managed can have profound and long-lasting consequences. In this paper, emergent of a broader study funded by the College of Radiographers Industrial Partnership Scheme, findings around this initial transition period in diagnostic radiography are investigated.

Methods: With institutional ethical approval, N=20 ($f=13$, $m=7$) junior diagnostic radiographers working across the UK were recruited for extended, semi-structured telephone interviews. Verbatim transcripts were analysed using Straussian Grounded Theory (Waring et al., 2018).

Results: Participants reported a range of nuanced positive experiences of individually-tailored induction and preceptorship, which had smoothed the pathway into practice in both the short and longer terms; they helped rapidly align personal identities/expectations with that of a

“real radiographer.” While actively negative (often generic) experiences were reported to have stymied this process, an overall *absence* of induction/preceptorship was received more variably. While some participants felt undermined, others claimed that it had boosted their resilience and made them more ready for the challenges ahead.

Conclusion: Findings echo the concerns of Yale (2019), regarding personal tutoring in HE; it may be the case that no transition-management is better for new radiographers’ adjustment than something too generic and/or inflexible.

References

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