A SURVEY OF RADIOGRAPHER FILM READERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF WORKLOAD, PERFORMANCE AND JOB SATISFACTION IN THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE BREAST SCREENING PROGRAMME

Helen Newman
DOR, MSc
Chelmsford and Colchester Breast Screening Unit

BACKGROUND
The NHSBSP age extension trial began in 2009 and is still recruiting, potentially involving several million women by the mid-2020s (Public Health England, 2014). This could have a huge impact on the workload and efficiency of the service unless more resources are deployed, however these developments have been introduced without a planned concomitant increase in staffing (Taylor-Phillips et al, 2011). The implementation of age extension has increased the reporting workload. This could have a significant effect on the volumes read by Radiographers as there is a reported shortage of breast radiologists (RCR, 2016). The introduction of radiographers double reporting could also increase radiographers’ workload.

Currently there is no evidence to show whether radiographers are reporting high volumes and no conclusive evidence on whether this influences performance (Cornford et al, 2011, Duncan and Scott, 2011). Visual fatigue could also be a factor which may affect performance and should be taken into consideration with a high volume workload (Krupinski, 2011). Radiographers in advanced practice are required to provide evidence of Continual Professional Development relevant to their scope of practice to maintain standards for professional registration. With a heavy workload the ScRo (2008) acknowledge that this is not always practicable despite recommending protected time for this activity.

The limited evidence published on the job satisfaction of radiographer film readers suggests that it is related to advanced skills, work control and professional status (Gronos and Pajukari, 2010). Job satisfaction is reported to increase patients’ perception of good care.

The projected number of retirements of breast radiologists within the next 5 years is approximately 21% of the workforce (ICR, 2016). With increasing workloads and fewer resources, investment in this professional group could secure the future quality of the breast screening service and help in achieving its targets.

AIM: The aim of this study was to explore radiographer film readers’ perceptions of workload, performance and their overall job satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES:
• To examine radiographer film readers’ perceptions of workload
• To explore the factors influencing film readers’ perceptions of performance
• To determine the factors affecting their job satisfaction

METHODOLOGY:
A survey was conducted to gather qualitative and quantitative data using an electronic questionnaire with open and closed questions as the data collection tool. A pilot study was carried out using a representative sample.

SAMPLE: Purposeful sampling was employed and all qualified radiographer film readers in a region of the NHSBSP were included. An invitation letter, participant information leaflet and link to the questionnaire was e-mailed to managers of 17 breast screening units for distribution. Numbers of film readers were requested from the managers to calculate the sample size.

ETHICS: Ethical approval was granted by Kingston University & St George’s University of London and by the host NHS Trust. This study was classified as service evaluation therefore IRAS was not required.

LIMITATIONS:
• Not a national survey
• Interviews not conducted
• Overall response rates were low

RESULTS
A total of 42 readers received the questionnaire and 25 completed it giving a response rate of 59%. There was no response from 4 units so it has been assumed that the questionnaire was not distributed to these film readers.

Respondents were:
4 consultant radiographers
19 advanced practitioners
1 lead radiographer
1 clinical superintendent

Figure 1 shows the skill mix of respondents.
72% of readers are performing mammography and only 16% are involved in research.

All BSUs in the sample group have started age extension.

Figure 2 shows the individual reporting volumes of radiographers. 40% of radiographers are reporting high volumes of mammograms (>8333 p.a.)

67% of respondents thought that performance fluctuated for reasons such as:
- post performs
- interruptions
- fatigue
- following performance reviews and audit

CPD was perceived to improve performance and job satisfaction but 52% stated that this was mostly done in their own time. 84% of readers are satisfied in their role and involvement in decision making is perceived to increase work control and improve job satisfaction.

Common themes for satisfaction and dissatisfaction are displayed in the table below.

SATISFACTION
- Enhancing patient care
- Advanced clinical skills
- autonomy
- training
- Work control

DISSATISFACTION
- General workload
- Poor organisation
- No time for CPD
- Not enough workstations
- Unfair remuneration

DISCUSSION
With a perceived increase in workload and 40% reporting high volumes, the effect on radiographers’ reading performance is uncertain and more evidence is required to assess the potential implications for the service. A shortage of radiologists and film readers does not currently appear to be the main factor influencing individual workloads in most units.

Many radiographers perceive their performance to fluctuate and report an increase in recall rates when tired and following PERFORMS. Interruptions are also thought to affect performance by breaking concentration.

A heavy clinical workload and poor research culture explain the lack of involvement in research. CPD is reported to influence performance and job satisfaction but radiographers feel they do not have enough time for this.

Film readers are generally satisfied in their roles which may contribute to the perception of better patient care.

CONCLUSIONS
• 40% of Radiographers are reporting high volumes of mammograms but there is no evidence that readers perceive this to affect performance
• There does not currently appear to be a significant shortage of radiologists
• Performance and satisfaction could be improved by facilitating more time for CPD
• Patients should perceive a good quality of care due to the high level of job satisfaction

REFERENCES


"... film reading sessions have to be given up to work in clinics"

Increased workload such as management duties with little extra allocated time to complete

"I am often involved in discussions regarding decisions/changes and I feel that my opinions are valued"

Mammography and managerial responsibilities conflict with reporting times the most and reporting efficiency could be improved with better organisation and utilisation of viewers.

Role variety and being able to make a difference to the patient journey are common themes influencing job satisfaction. Involvement in decision making also improves satisfaction by giving the perception of more work control.

"I get satisfaction from being an experienced radiographer who is confident and competent to deliver the care expected of me"

Seeing the progress I have made in my decisions making process in film reading

Lack of opportunity to undertake research/audit

I definitely overcall once I have sat a PERFORMS test

I do not feel on top of my game when tired and following PERFORMS. Interruptions fluctuate and report an increase in recall rates when tired and following PERFORMS. Interruptions are also thought to affect performance by breaking concentration.

"There is not the time nor the money for CPD... There is little/no opportunity to attend external courses/conferences at which to learn from others"

"Increased workload such as management duties with little extra allocated time to complete"

"I do read when I do not feel on top of my game... I feel I am less decisive and tend to recall or put more to consensus on these occasions"

"... film reading sessions have to be given up to work in clinics"

Increased workload such as management duties with little extra allocated time to complete

"I get satisfaction from being an experienced radiographer who is confident and competent to deliver the care expected of me"

Seeing the progress I have made in my decisions making process in film reading

Lack of opportunity to undertake research/audit

I definitely overcall once I have sat a PERFORMS test

I do not feel on top of my game when tired and following PERFORMS. Interruptions fluctuate and report an increase in recall rates when tired and following PERFORMS. Interruptions are also thought to affect performance by breaking concentration.

"There is not the time nor the money for CPD... There is little/no opportunity to attend external courses/conferences at which to learn from others"

"Increased workload such as management duties with little extra allocated time to complete"