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Impact of Prospective Departmental Visit on Career Choice in Radiotherapy

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Introduction

In line with the recommendations from Society College of Radiographer's (SCoR) on improving student attrition in Radiotherapy⁽¹⁾, prospective students applying at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) are required to attend a visit to Radiotherapy. It is particularly important to address the poor attrition rate of student radiographers, to ensure workforce delivery is maintained with increasing service provision over the next few years⁽²⁾.

To ensure the quality and consistency of departmental visits, Weston Park Liaison Team in partnership with SHU evaluated the prospective student's experiences, with a view to identify areas for development. During the departmental visit, the prospective student is assessed by the clinical staff as to whether they deem the applicant suitable for a career in Radiotherapy. Although the visit is to assess their suitability, primarily the visit is to ensure that they fully appreciate the role of a Therapeutic Radiographer and the environment in which they would be trained in. This experience will also help them in their early stages of academic training.

Method

Following a departmental visit, all prospective students were sent an online questionnaire. This was composed of Likert and free text questions to ensure applicants could adequately feedback on their experiences. The questions focused specifically on how the visit assisted with their decision-making and areas of concern in regards to the role and also the quality of the visit.

Prospective Student Feedback

"I enjoyed all of it, but I can see how it could be emotional sometimes as some of the patients were in pain when they arrived."

"I think the visit day was vital to make me realise how busy and fast paced the role can be & how big the department was; both important considerations I had not thought about initially."

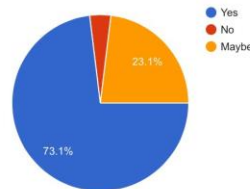
"There's nothing more helpful than seeing someone competently do the job you are about to spend years studying to do, it allowed me to put myself in their shoes & imagine I could do that too."

"Confirmed it as a potential career but ended up choosing to do teaching instead."

"Prior to this visit the only exposure I had was from online content, info videos on YouTube and Speaking with tutors on the open evening. The visit was fantastic to actually have a feel for what it is like in the life of a Therapeutic Radiographer. Observing the dynamic of the team working together has definitely inspired me further."

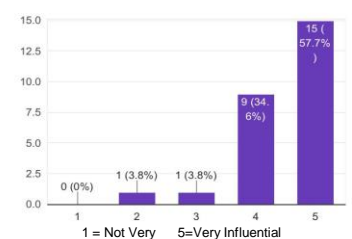
Did the visit confirm this is the career you want to pursue?

26 responses



How important was the visit in assisting you to make your career choice?

26 responses



Findings & Discussion

26 prospective students have to date completed this questionnaire. So far the results indicate that the departmental visit is paramount when deciding upon future career pathways. The feedback has facilitated the development of the visits in terms of organisation, placement rotation, staff engagement, as well as support for the applicant.

The departmental visits have influenced positively on conversion onto the course, contributing to low attrition rates at Sheffield Hallam University (less than 8%).

Attrition within healthcare is affected by many factors; however ensuring appropriate career choice has impacted positively as a result of departmental visits⁽³⁾.

UK Trusts are under considerable scrutiny in facilitating work experience placements and as a result, Human Resources now screen applicants. This can be timely, expensive and create a significant workload for clinical staff. The benefit of the departmental visit on retention, attrition and enthusiasm of students far outweighs the current barriers.

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