

Title: **Assessing the Mismatch Between Academic and Clinical Settings: a case study into retention and the student experience**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

This session will assist the delegate in adapting aspects of course planning and delivery through:

- Recognising the dichotomy of academic and practice-based educational cultures
- Appraising positive and negative influences in the student experience
- Applying insights to curriculum development.

Session Outline

The paper explores issues relating to the retention of students on an undergraduate pre-registration programme for Therapeutic Radiography through characterisation of the unique features of the students' practice and education, and identification of positive and negative aspects of their experience. It arises from the necessity to provide a sufficient and able workforce in cancer care (DH, 2000a; DH, 2000b).

Undergraduate academic education today uses and develops a student focused, self directed and questioning approach (Knowles, 1973) which is now widely accepted as facilitating adult learning. It requires active learning on the part of the students rather than the more passive observation (Rolfe & Sanson-Fisher 2002). Undergraduate radiotherapy practice makes very particular demands and provides equally compelling rewards, thus it was considered important to elicit personal narratives from radiotherapy students who remained on course where attrition has been a continuing issue. In this qualitative study data was collected through focus groups with students from each year of the three year course. The key questions for the focus group discussions, identified from some of the outcomes of a previous study at the same institution (Francis, Rogers & Morgan, 2004), were around the issues of why some students remain on their programmes of study whilst others leave even when they are confronted with similar circumstances.

A detailed thematic analysis was carried out from which three primary themes emerged:

- Goals: aspirations, source of motivation
- Ownership: actions which demonstrates active taking responsibility for learning,
- Support: Academic, clinical, peer, general.

These issues and their impact for university and clinical staff are addressed in this discussion paper.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- Presentation – context methodology (10 minutes)
- Q & A (5 minutes)
- Presentation of findings (10 minutes)
- Discussion of findings (10 minutes)
- Changes being implemented and planned (5 minutes)
- Final Q &A (5 minutes)

References

Department of Health 2000a. The NHS Cancer Plan: a plan for investment, a plan for reform. London HMSO.

Department of Health 2000b. A Health Service for All the Talents: Developing the NHS workforce. London HMSO.

Francis G; Rogers N; Morgan G (2004). Subsistence and support strategies used by undergraduate radiography students and the potential to influence student retention. South West London Strategic Health Authority, London ISBN 0 9549809 0 7

Knowles, 1973. Andragogy: an emerging technology for adult learning. In M Tight, ed. Education for Adults. London: Croom-Helm; pp230-1

Rolfe IE & Sanson-Fisher RW, 2002. Translating learning principles into practice. Medical Education; 36: 345-352