

Abstract: Exploring the experiences of first year student radiographers in developing their use of touch.

Background and purpose

Radiography is dichotomous in its use of touch. For diagnostic radiographers, touch focuses around two different and often conflicting functions aligning to the scientific and empathetic paradigms. The first is related to the task of correctly positioning patients for X-ray examinations, Gnostic. The second is the therapeutic use conveying compassion and offering reassurance, Empathetic. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students find developing the use of touch in practice daunting as this is often the first time they make physical contact with strangers in a professional context. The aim was to explore experiences of first year diagnostic radiography students in developing the use of touch during their first placement.

Methods

All first-year students were invited to participate. Focus groups were undertaken after students had undertaken six weeks of placement. The focus groups were semi-structured using an interview guide on Microsoft Teams.

Findings/ Results

Three focus groups took place, nine students participated. Responses were thematically analysed, with four themes emerging: awareness of touch, early experience, developing confidence and touch beyond positioning.

Discussion/ Conclusion

Students were very open about how they felt about touching people. They wanted to practice in the safe environment at university before touching patients. They needed reassurance and some support with how to adapt to more vulnerable patient groups.

Observing radiographers helped them feel more confident in how and when to touch patients.

The findings will be used to identify issues experienced and discuss ways in to better prepare and support students prior to their first placement.

Authors: Jane Harvey-Lloyd (University of Leeds), RUTH STRUDWICK (University of Suffolk)