

EFRS Statement on the Importance of Patient Engagement and the Patient Voice within Radiographic Practice

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Introduction

Patient engagement is important in supporting the delivery of quality health care [1-3]. Many organisations now ensure that a requirement for patient engagement and patient voice is embedded within their strategic goals and operational plans [4].

'They want to know how to protect and improve their health and wellbeing; when they are ill, they want comprehensible information about treatment options and likely outcomes and play an active role in decision making; and, in addition to seeking factual and effective health advice when they need it, most people also want to know what they can do to help themselves' [5].

To achieve this goal requires that the patient is adequately informed of all aspects of a procedure and that the radiographer is sensitive to the needs and capacity of each patient (Figure 1). Patient voice and engagement should be at the centre of service delivery, innovation, education and research. Patient voice includes all aspects of a patient's experience of their own health and wellbeing and how a disease or condition impacts themselves, families and/or carers, their relationships and their ability to engage in everyday life. It is well acknowledged that an engaged patient does not only help chart their own health care course, they also play an important role shaping decisions made at every point in the health care process [7]. Coulter (2012) highlights that this can include hospital design, quality improvements in day-to-day health care provision as well as co-creation of patient education materials [8].

At an organisational level, the strategic priorities of the European Federation of Radiographer Societies (EFRS) should be informed by the voice of the patient. It is essential that patient voice is fully embedded to ensure full collaboration across all areas of EFRS activity and ultimately to help support ongoing improvements in patient care through increased awareness of patients' needs within clinical imaging, nuclear medicine, and radiotherapy services across Europe. In the 2020 EFRS Member Surveys, 35.7% of responding national societies indicated that they have public or patient involvement in their society who contribute to their policies. This was a significant increase from 16.1% in our 2017 survey. In terms of the educational institutions within the EFRS Educational Wing, 31.6% indicated that they have public or patient involvement in their programmes.

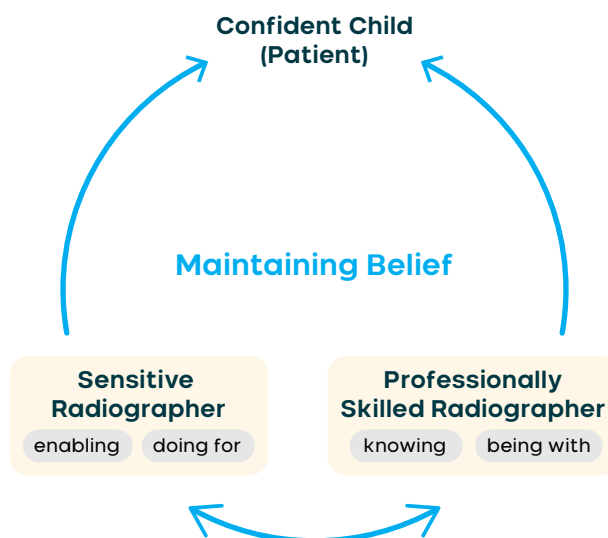


Figure 1. The Radiographer Caring Model [6]

Patient engagement and patient voice within radiographic practice

Role in service delivery and innovation

Patients, carers, and the public have been recognised as playing an important role in improving healthcare services [9]. Patient engagement has traditionally focused on augmenting surveys and complaints processes [4]. Over recent years there has been greater focus on assessing patient experiences rather than patient satisfaction. Involving patients in the design and delivery of healthcare can lead to reductions in hospital admissions [10], improvements in effectiveness, efficiency and quality of health services [11-13], improved quality of life, and enhanced quality and accountability of health services [14]. Practices for promoting patient engagement within service delivery and innovation may include:

- Developing and utilising a Patient Advisory Group (PAG);
- Educating patients and carers through effective verbal and written communication.
- Encouraging patients to ask questions and give feedback;
- Including patient representatives within all work-streams / projects;
- Having dedicated communication experts and/or dedicated communication channels (incl. social media channels);
- Progressively include the patient during decision-making to promote a culture of commitment.

Role in radiographer education

It is evident from the literature, that patients and their families are involved in the education of health and social care professions in a variety of ways.[15] Involving patients in the training process can help highlight the vital importance of effective communication, empathy, compassion and commitment to learning from patients. Using real-life patient-practitioner interactions has been reported as a highly useful pedagogical tool in educating radiographers.[16] Many regulatory organisations, such as the United Kingdom Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) have mandated that patient voice is integrated into all aspects of healthcare education into all aspects of healthcare education for the professions it regulates. [17].

Patient representatives can be involved in radiography education in the following ways:

- Recruitment and selection of students;
- Involvement in teaching activities, for example storytelling [18];
- Practise-based activities and assessment [19].

When considering the role of patients in radiography education consideration should be given to financing such endeavours [20], accessing vulnerable groups [21], relationships between academics and service users [22] and the evidence regarding the impact of service user involvement in education [23]. Educators should be mindful of a patient's workload and also their wellbeing. It is likely that patients would benefit from an introduction or training prior to engaging in teaching and learning activities. Evaluation on the impact should be based on opportunities for patients to provide feedback after contributing to teaching and learning, and support provided to meet identified needs.

Role in radiographer-led research

Patients are extremely important in radiography research and can facilitate a number of roles. In many jurisdictions, Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) is a fundamental requirement of health care research and grant applications ensuring that research-questions and activities are focused and developed around the needs of patients. Good practice requires that patients and public work alongside radiographers in all stages of research, from the proposal stage onwards to include dissemination

strategies. Analysis of the patient voice [23] has suggested the following as recommendations when including patients, carers and the public in research:

- Researchers should understand the value patients and the public can bring to research and research;
- Projects should be initiated, designed and delivered in partnership;
- Research involving patients and the public should be informed by national guidelines and good practice;
- Researchers should continually consider the diversity of patients within research projects;
- Researchers should share research in an understandable language, at regular intervals throughout the project as well as at the end;
- Researchers should ensure that all research includes the patient voice at all stages in the research process, by including patient representatives in co-production of research;
- Researchers should ensure that images acquired as part of research studies should follow national guidelines regarding incidental findings;
- When considering dissemination strategies, researchers should consider involving patients in the drafting of public / patient friendly summaries of findings;
- Researchers must observe and abide by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) when processing any patient data, including medical images.

Summary

The patient voice and patient engagement can add value to all aspects of radiography practice and service development. Understanding the patients' perspectives and utilising patients' own experiences across all areas of service development, education and research is vital to the radiography profession and informs radiographic practice. The EFRS recommends that our national societies and Educational Wing members continue to embrace the patient voice and seek to engage patients in all aspects of the work. In doing so, the EFRS will, where appropriate, actively consider the patient voice within its strategy and activity plan.

Acknowledgments

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