

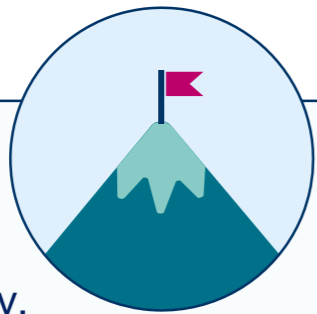
An innovative, multidisciplinary approach to neck lump FNA and Core Biopsy training for sonographers in Scotland

Claire Lindsay, Senior Specialist Lead Sonographer
National Ultrasound Training Programme, NHS Scotland Academy



Aim

To provide high quality, multidisciplinary training to accelerate training and create a more sustainable workforce to address demand whilst increasing opportunities for progression.



Methods

It has traditionally been difficult for sonographers in Scotland to progress with interventional procedures within their roles, despite many years of experience. Survey's carried out by the SOR (2019) and BMUS (2021) established that lack of engagement from radiologists and management was leading to sonographers feeling unsupported to progress with low job satisfaction and very few career development opportunities. The National Ultrasound Programme has identified this as a learning gap and has created a learning schedule where sonographers can attend for concentrated, dedicated hands on training. Training includes sonography skills in Head and Neck US, FNA and core biopsy of neck lumps, allowing them to return to their home boards to consolidate their skills. Learners attend the NUTP for a training block to include: lecture from Head and Neck Consultant Radiologist including Q&A session. Phantom sessions for familiarisation with FNA and Core biopsy needles. Dedicated actual patient scan list with Consultant Radiologist. Further sessions to consolidate skills with Head and Neck sonographer.

Results

The NUTP is an exemplar of innovation and collaboration with high-quality training and service delivery outcomes (SRTP, 2023). The NUTP provides a much needed dedicated training environment which is adaptable to the needs of learners, patients and boards. This model accelerates training outcomes allowing learners return to their home boards with at least their basic training needs met.



Discussion

NUTP continues to offer an efficient and patient centred resource nationally, improving diagnostic access and subsequent outcomes for patients, by providing an enhanced, accelerated training model whilst relieving the training burden on boards.

It has been shown that there are multiple barriers to higher level practice for sonographers including time restraints, service demands and a lack of managerial interest or support (Nightingale et al, 2021). Furthermore, there may not be a full understanding of what advanced practice comprises.

The programme of training offered at NUTP aims to alleviate some of the issues that sonographers face when trying to develop their roles.

The training aims to follow the RCR Ultrasound training recommendations (2017) to include training and practice and competencies to be acquired, moving through levels 1 and 2 before learners go back to their home boards to work towards level 3.

Learners are advised on SOP's, Patient Group Directives and audits they should be carrying out. Participation in MDT's, ongoing CPD and relevant literature to be aware of.

Learners are educated on actionable reports and why this is required for safe patient management. The importance of a report that accurately describes the imaging findings, a diagnosis or a list of differential diagnoses, with suggestions for further appropriate imaging, other investigations or patient management.

References

- [ultrasound workforce uk census 2019.pdf 2 \(sor.org\)](#)
- [Workforce Planning – Scottish Radiology Transformation Programme \(2016-2023\)](#)
- [BMUS Sonographers Scope of Practice Report FINAL.pdf](#)
- Nightingale, J., Burton, M., Appleyard, R., Sevens, T. & Campbell, S. (2021) "Retention of radiographers: A qualitative exploration of factors influencing decisions to leave or remain within the NHS", *Radiography*, 27(3), pp. 795-802.
- [Ultrasound training recommendations for medical and surgical specialties, Third edition \(bmus.org\)](#)