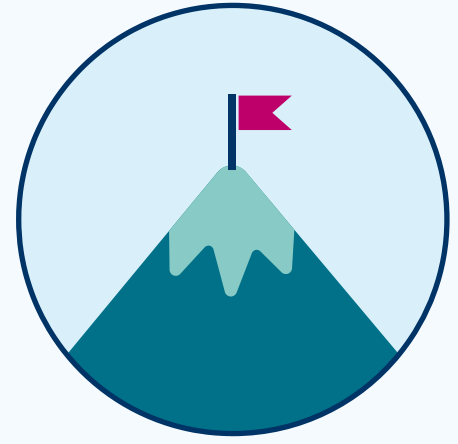


Delivering ultrasound training in non-acute settings: measuring impact

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Aim

To assess the impact of delivering general medical ultrasound tuition to sonographers in a non acute setting using a novel approach to clinical training.

Methods

Learners attended a new National Ultrasound Training Programme (NUTP). Whilst the academic component of their training was unchanged, NUTP provided five, one week blocks of focused training over the academic year, in conjunction with their local mentor in a permanent placement.

Using dedicated training lists on live patients, learners were taught knobology, practical scanning and reporting. They were surveyed at the start and end of the programme. Mentors were interviewed halfway through the academic year and surveyed on completion. The impact on acute sites was captured via feedback from Service Managers. Furthermore, all patients were invited to complete a patient satisfaction survey.



Results

Eleven Learners from 6 health boards attended NUTP. Feedback was globally outstanding with praise for training in a relaxed, supportive, unhurried environment. All felt more confident after attending and felt their training had accelerated as a result. Mentors expressed real confidence in the programme. They believed the quality of training was exemplary and it took pressure off acute sites.

As a consequence, all indicated they would use the programme again. Service Managers had a similar response to mentors and some commented not having to convert some lists to training lists impacted on patient turnaround and eased pressure on mentors, positively impacting unscheduled care and outpatient waits. To date, over 5000 scans have been performed at NUTP. Patient feedback has been tremendous, with over 2000 responses reporting 100% patient satisfaction.

“ Outpatient appointments with dedicated training lists helps greatly as scanning complex inpatients before a sound scanning technique and methodical approach has been achieved can impact the confidence of the trainees.

“ Our trainee benefitted from having additional training by 2 very experienced sonographers and it helped to ensure capacity wasn't reduced too significantly by the extended appointments times required to provide quality training in-house.

“ Able to scan full lists when trainee is at the academy, increased capacity for the board.

“ I am unsure if I would have been able to complete my training without the NUTP. This programme was a lifeline at the start of my training as I was still required to honour my radiography rota commitments which did not allow adequate time to train in the ultrasound department. Having the NUTP provided me with a supportive, patient and cohesive learning environment which is difficult to achieve within my place of work. All trainers were very supportive and took the time to help me with areas that needed further development.

Discussion

Scotland's Health Education Institutions and Imaging Networks note this novel model as a first in Diagnostics in Scotland. By offering an enhanced method of clinical training, whilst supporting additional clinical capacity, feedback so far has demonstrated learners thrived in the environment and resulted in accelerated clinical competence and confidence. Access to NUTP has resulted in increased numbers of trained staff across Scotland, leading to a more sustainable workforce. This in turn, should result in less use of outsourcing moving forward.

The work of NUTP has led to a significant reduction in outpatient waiting times nationally, supporting COVID recovery. Coupled with improved acute access to ultrasound by reducing the need for training lists, the programme has proved to be extremely effective on many levels.

Conclusions

NUTP has been successfully developed to address the needs of NHS Scotland by growing and developing the workforce in Medical Ultrasound. Results demonstrate NUTP has been extremely well received by learners, mentors, managers and patients. The training has accelerated and enhanced learning whilst easing pressure on acute sites and reducing waiting times.



Next Steps

Training in ear, nose and throat and carotid doppler ultrasound will commence later this year. The programme aims to facilitate training in other specialities including musculo-skeletal ultrasound and FNA / core biopsy of neck lumps. Training of ST1 Radiology Registrars has commenced with ST1s attending for a week of intensive training. NUTP are upskilling some trained sonographers and senior radiology registrars in subspecialities. A masterclass in upper and lower limb DVT is planned for early 2024. For more information, please contact: nhsscotlandacademy@nhs.scot