

RADIOGRAPHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING ESTABLISHING A SELF REGULATORY BODY IN ESWATINI

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INTRODUCTION

- Eswatini remains one of the countries in Southern Africa without a regulating authority for radiation safety in the radiography departments.
- This means radiation use in the country is uncontrolled.
- Quality control (QC) tests and radiation protection practices in radiography departments are unmonitored.
- Radiographers receive training in radiation safety as part of their undergraduate training.
- They are therefore knowledgeable and well positioned to establish their own set of rules in order to ensure the protection of themselves, patients and the public from the harmful effects of ionizing radiation.
- Hence the idea of establishing informal self-regulatory mechanisms.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to explore radiographers' perceptions regarding establishing a self-regulatory body that will oversee radiation safety in the radiography departments in Eswatini.

The following research objectives were formulated;

- To describe radiographers' views towards the performance of QC tests in the radiography departments in Swaziland.
- To establish if radiographers apply radiation protection measures in the radiography departments in Swaziland.
- To describe radiographers' perceptions towards establishing a self-regulatory body that will monitor radiation protection and QC practices in the radiography departments in Swaziland.

METHODS

- A qualitative, exploratory and descriptive research approach was undertaken.
- Radiographers currently registered and practicing in Eswatini were purposively selected and invited to participate.
- Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Audiotapes and field notes were used.
- Audio taped interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Participants were asked the following questions;
 - Can you tell me about the QC tests that you perform in your department and what you do with the results?
 - How do you think not doing QC tests impacts on radiation protection?
 - What radiation safety measures do you apply in protecting yourself, your patients and the public?
 - What are your perceptions with regards to establishing a self- regulatory body for radiation control purposes in the radiography departments in Swaziland?
 - What recommendations would you suggest to improve the current situation with regards to monitoring compliance and ensuring safety in all the radiography departments in the country?

RESULTS

- A total of 18 radiographers were interviewed. Data was saturated at the 18th interview
- Emergent themes and findings are presented in a table in the next slide.

THEME	FINDING	PARTICIPANT QUOTE
Awareness of the need to perform QC tests	Some radiographers were performing QC tests, knew the value of performing tests as well as the impact that non-performance of these tests has on the patients, members of the public as well as the staff in the departments in terms of radiation safety	'...We do also reject analysis... ' '...We are not sure if the environment we are working in is safe or not..... ever since I got here no one has ever come to test the walls, the aprons...'
Radiation protection and safety in the radiography departments	Radiographers demonstrated an awareness of the importance of applying radiation protection principles during practice	'We use lead aprons, making sure the doors are closed when exposing for the public'
Radiographers' responsibility towards radiation protection	Radiographers are aware of their responsibilities in limiting radiation doses during radiography examinations	'I always use the high KV technique. And then collimation, and ALARA principle I use those'
Education and training in radiation safety for radiographers and other stakeholders	There is a need for continuous professional development for radiographers as well as education on radiation protection and safety for hospital management and responsible persons in government.	'I think we need to have frequent refresher trainings on the roles and responsibilities of a radiographer when it comes to radiation protection' 'I think we need to have workshops for doctors to learn about radiation ... management itself as well as Ministry of Health. They need to understand what ionizing radiation is and its effects'
Support from governmental and management structures	There is a need for a collaborative effort between government and hospital management structures to develop and implement radiation safety policies	'...we expect government to come up with the relevant legislation, because everything is governed by law introduce proper management structures within radiology departments...'
The need for the self regulatory body in the radiography departments	There is a need for the self regulatory body and it can be established with support from Government	'..we have people that are doing radiography who are not trained radiographers. But if there is a body...and the people are properly trained to handle radiation then everything will be done properly' '..we expect government to come up with the relevant

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study;

- There is awareness that radiation safety practices are necessary in the radiography departments,
- Education and training of radiographers and relevant stakeholders can help improve radiation safety in the radiography departments,
- The self- regulatory body can be established with support from government and management structures.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- The need for monitoring structures in order to ensure radiation safety in the radiography departments is highlighted in this study.
- Government officials and hospital management are crucial in ensuring radiation safety in radiography departments.