

## 5. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

### 5.3 Continuing Professional Development

#### Introduction

It is widely accepted that all professionals should maintain, update and improve their knowledge and skills through the process of continuous professional development (CPD). This may involve a range of learning activities – formal and informal. Anecdotally, many radiographers have difficulty in accessing CPD opportunities, although these difficulties vary according to a range of factors, not least of which are the perceptions of the individual practitioner concerning viable learning opportunities.

**Aim:** To determine what, if any, CPD provision might usefully be put in place to support the development of radiographers across Europe

#### Objectives:

1. To identify the subject matter most radiographers consider important for CPD purposes
2. To consider how much time radiographers would be willing to commit to CPD activities
3. To consider radiographers' preferred format for learning materials

#### Composition of sub-group:

The subgroup consisted of a number of educators and service managers from a range of European countries, initially with a strong bias towards northern European states. Enormous efforts were made to recruit participants from Eastern and Southern Europe and these were successful – by year three of the project these countries were much better represented within the group.

#### Outputs at the end of year three:

- The CPD Survey
- CPD research analysis and report

#### The CPD Survey

It was clear from the outset that a wide-ranging survey would be required to begin to make some kind of analysis of the preferences of radiographers across Europe with regard to CPD provision. It was recognised that this should be modest in its aims and that the questions asked should be clear, simple and relevant to radiographers working with a very diverse range of qualifications, across a varied range of healthcare systems with differing levels of funding and educational resources.

Two questionnaires developed – the first of these gave information about profile of the radiographers participating from the point of view of years of professional experience, together with data concerning the time they would allocate to CPD activities and their preferred format for the development of CPD materials. The second focused on the subject matter or topics that such materials might usefully cover.

#### *Initial Survey: Survey one*

It is more accurate to talk of an 'initial' rather than 'pilot' survey, since the development of this work was a continuous process and the support of the Information Technology Department of the University of Kaunas, Lithuania ensured that all data collected could be incorporated seamlessly as the survey was refined.

This initial survey served two purposes:

- It produced the data used in this report concerning the time radiographers would be willing to set aside for CPD and their preferred format for CPD materials
- It supported the subsequent development of the survey regarding the preferred subject matter for the development of CPD materials.

The initial survey was available in seven languages (English, Finnish, French, German, Lithuanian, Norwegian and Swedish) and was circulated across a range of institutions across the country of each sub-group member. 437 questionnaires were distributed of which 307 were returned (70%).

#### **Survey Two:**

The second survey focused on the subject matter considered by radiographers to be most appropriate and useful for their CPD needs. Data was put together using a spreadsheet format for ease of analysis. This was particularly helpful in ensuring that data could be used even though the format of the questionnaire might be modified to suit the purposes of translation or adjustment to the needs of radiographers from differing professional and educational backgrounds.

#### **Survey findings:**

Survey one: The statistical data from the initial survey can be summarised as follows:

##### Importance of CPD:

- 95% of radiographers surveyed considered CPD 'important' or 'very important'
- 5% considered CPD unimportant
- Of those surveyed 83% had at least eleven years professional experience

##### Time radiographers were willing to commit to CPD:

- 44% were willing to commit 1-5 hours per month to CPD
- 33% were willing to commit 6-10 hours per month to CPD
- 15% were willing to commit over 10 hours per month to CPD
- 8% were unwilling to spend any time on CPD

##### Mode of delivery of CPD:

- A majority (66%) would prefer a combination of paper-based and Internet materials
- 21% would prefer paper-based learning only
- 11% would prefer Internet-based learning
- 2% would prefer digitally-based learning without the Internet
- At the time of the initial survey 73% of respondents claimed they could access the Internet, although no information was sought about ease or availability of access

Language for CPD:

- 62% of radiographers surveyed would only use materials for CPD in their own language (i.e. the language predominantly used in their professional practice)
- 38% would consider using CPD materials in another language
- Of these, just over one-half (53%) indicated that they would use CPD materials in English

Survey two: The bar chart from the (ongoing) second survey (*table 1*) shows cross-sectional imaging to be the most popular choice for CPD materials, followed by digital imaging, image interpretation and radiation protection.

**CPD requirements of respondents to HENRE CPD survey 2003-05**

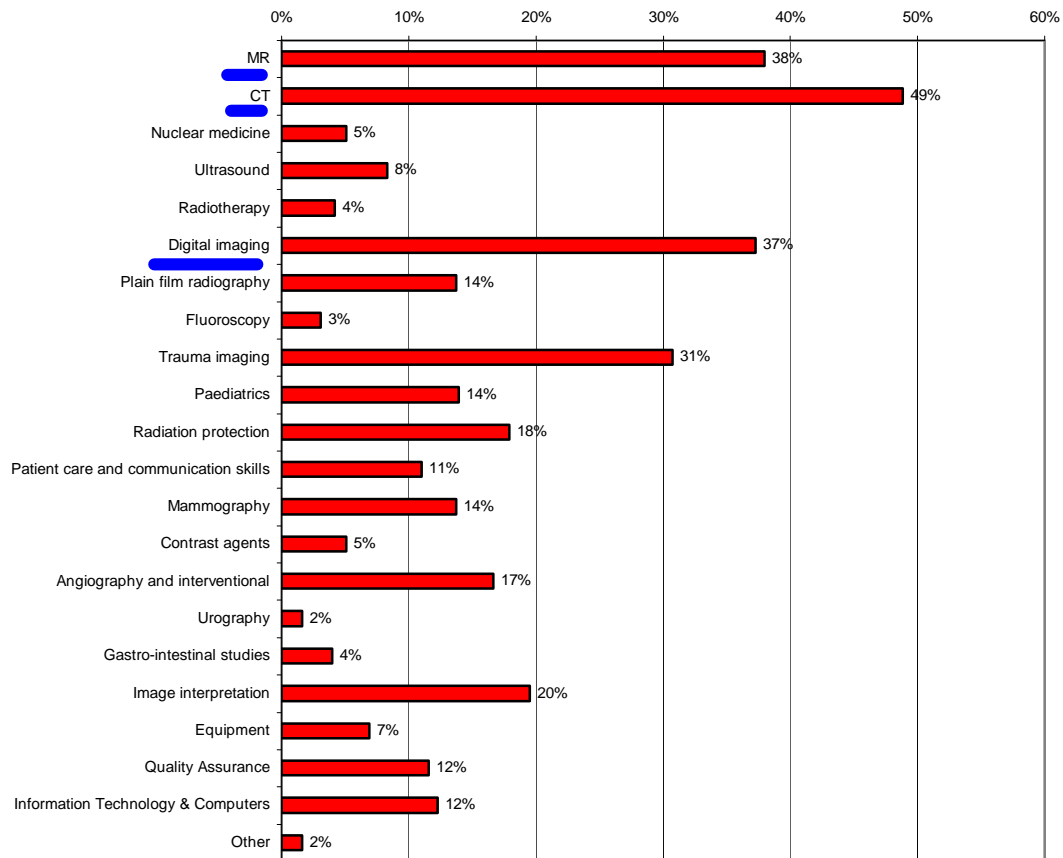


Table 1: preferred choice for CPD materials

**Beneficiaries and Impact:**

The information collected in survey one gives a terse, but potentially valuable summary of a number of the key requirements for CPD across the countries surveyed. It should be pointed out that a closer analysis might reveal regional variations, but overall the responses from participants across Europe were surprisingly consistent given the varying educational and healthcare systems in the different countries.

**Potential beneficiaries include:**

1. Educational institutions wishing to develop CPD learning materials for radiographers in their own countries, or indeed across national boundaries, might find the survey results useful in determining the content and mode of delivery of CPD packages aimed at radiographers
2. The European Union might be informed by this survey and subsequent work of the viability of developing or commissioning CPD materials for radiographers on a pan-European basis.

3. Individuals wishing to move to another EU country to practice might, in time, be able to access CPD materials to enable them to develop and enhance their professional knowledge and skills to a level required for employment in another state. This will benefit the entire Union with the provision of a better qualified and more mobile radiography workforce.
4. Individual practitioners will benefit from the availability of accessible CPD materials in a format and language of their choice with a content suited to their learning needs.
5. Most importantly of all, the patients and users of radiology services will benefit from a better-educated, more knowledgeable and potentially better motivated radiology workforce.

**Additional benefits and spin offs:**

During the timescale of the project, the working group members have used the information gained from discussion and the survey to inform the development of CPD programmes within their own countries. Professional contacts and networks have been developed and these have led to a real sense of purpose in developing mechanisms to share knowledge and experience across the continent.

Survey participants have commented that engaging in the survey has enabled them to reflect carefully on their own CPD needs and aspirations when considering their answers. Anecdotally, comments included:

*'This is the first time anybody has asked me what my learning needs are, sometimes we seem so busy in clinic that our needs just don't seem to count'*

*'I am willing to spend time on CPD, but I have to make it clear that as a busy professional and mother that the time I can commit is limited. It would be good if learning materials could be developed to accommodate my needs and to fit in to the little time I can make available.'*

*'It's all very well that learning can be found on the Internet, but this is often American and in English, as well as expensive when you consider our low salaries. Radiographers in my country do not have a knowledge of English to access this, we need materials in our own language.'*

**Conclusion**

This first stage of the HENRE project has been successful at bring together representation from Eastern and Southern European countries and from a range of professions, including radiography, nursing and physics and Information Technology support. Radiography education, research, management and clinical practice are well represented.

Overall, this work has begun to provide clear and simple guidance for the development of CPD programmes for radiographers on a pan-European basis. It has also established the mechanisms that might be used for further research in this area, which most appropriately should be firmly rooted in, and geared to the development of, practical solutions for the full and active participation in meaningful and appropriate CPD programmes for all radiographers across the continent.

**Recommendations for further work**

During the latter half of the project the group was mindful of the development of the 'Tuning' programme and considered carefully its implications for the education and development of radiographers across Europe. It was recognised that any future work around the development of pre and post-registration of radiographer education programmes must accommodate the requirements of the tuning process. Definition of second cycle degree competencies are vital to future work in this area.

The initial work can be developed by the delivery of:

- Collating and presenting CPD data on an ongoing basis to inform the development of CPD learning materials for radiographers across Europe
- The provision of appropriate learning materials – short courses, learning modules, refresher courses based on what radiographers can do and want
- A mechanism to set quality standards for CPD provision
- A mechanism to endorse CPD provision meeting the defined quality standards to lead to award of ECT (academic credit, transferable)
- Development of agreement of criteria for European re-registration

Finally, emphasis must be given to the importance of language and cultural issues – these must be addressed to ensure radiographers' acceptance of any commissioned CPD learning material.