

## Doctoral Level Study in Sonography: making the commitment and is it applicable in everyday practice?

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### ➤ Aim

To establish if undertaking Doctoral level study can translate into clinical practice and influence clinical ultrasound training models in the future. To highlight the commitment required to such study.

### ➤ Methods

Clinical Lead for the National Ultrasound Training Programme (NUTP), an experienced Consultant Sonographer commenced a Clinical Doctorate in 2023. In years one and two, students are taught modules in Contemporary Theory and Research, Research Design for Clinical Practice, Achieving Evidence-based Change in Healthcare Systems and in Expert Practice. Thereafter, a Practice Based Empirical Project and Thesis are undertaken. Having completed the first year, the relevance and practical application of such learning into clinical practice are reflected upon.

### ➤ Results

Evaluation of year one indicates the pertinence of the themes studied to everyday practice. The Theory of Expertise highlights the impact “Deliberate Practice” has on accelerating trainees’ learning. The training offered at the National Ultrasound Training Programme already centred around repetition, however, the team have further focussed training by incorporating bespoke lists for learners in specific areas requiring development.

By recognising and sharing learning around the stages of expertise, the team further appreciate the phases learners go through to become proficient in ultrasound. Furthermore, to understand not all sonographers will become an expert and what is an expert?



### ➤ Exploring Evidence Based Change in Healthcare

Settings provided a firm grounding in Change Theory and therein, psychological analysis of a problem. Such skills are undoubtedly of value to a Consultant Sonographer aiming to improve a patient pathway or training programme. Doctoral level study is a immense commitment. Working full-time and submitting large pieces of work is onerous but worthwhile. Support from employers is required financially and in allocated study time.

### ➤ Discussion

Routes for doctoral study include traditional PhD, PhD by publication, Professional Doctorate or Clinical Doctorate. The choice will depend on personal circumstances: recent exposure to research, time, current roles and responsibilities and perhaps funding or affiliations between a place of work and a particular Higher Education Institute (HEI). The Clinical Doctorate is specifically designed for students in full time clinical role. Starting with taught modules provides a supportive environment (and classmates) whilst honing research and writing skills. Whichever route is chosen, such study requires time, dedication and hard work. It also requires supportive employers. People often ask motives for undertaking doctorate study and where it will take my career. Such study enables learners to look at "the bigger picture" which invariably leads to effective collaboration, quality improvement and publication. This promotes the sonography profession and fulfils the requirements of the Society of Radiographers Consultant Practitioner Education and Career Framework.

Education is a lifelong journey. Doctorate study improves knowledge, awareness and confidence and provides transferable skills which are already contributing to improving clinical ultrasound training nationally.

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