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Delivering Compassionate and Quality Care in the Face of Significant Burnout and Fatigue



Understanding the Hidden Cost of Sonography Practice

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INTRODUCTION

This presentation explores how sonographers continue delivering compassionate care while experiencing significant levels of burnout and fatigue.

The Question: Can We Continue Delivering Exceptional Care While Running on Empty?

**Rising
demand**

**Workforce
shortages**

**Increasing
complexity**

**Emotional
burden**

Why This Matters

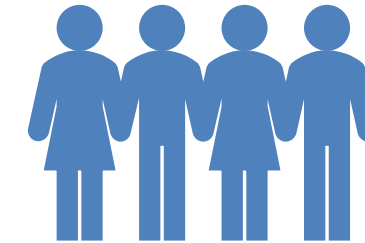
Ultrasound Demand Continues to Increase



11.4 million ultrasound examinations in England



Ultrasound among the most requested imaging tests



Workforce shortages remain a national challenge

The Reality of Modern Sonography: Every Day We Balance



Clinical accuracy



Time pressure



Service delivery targets



Emotional patient
interactions

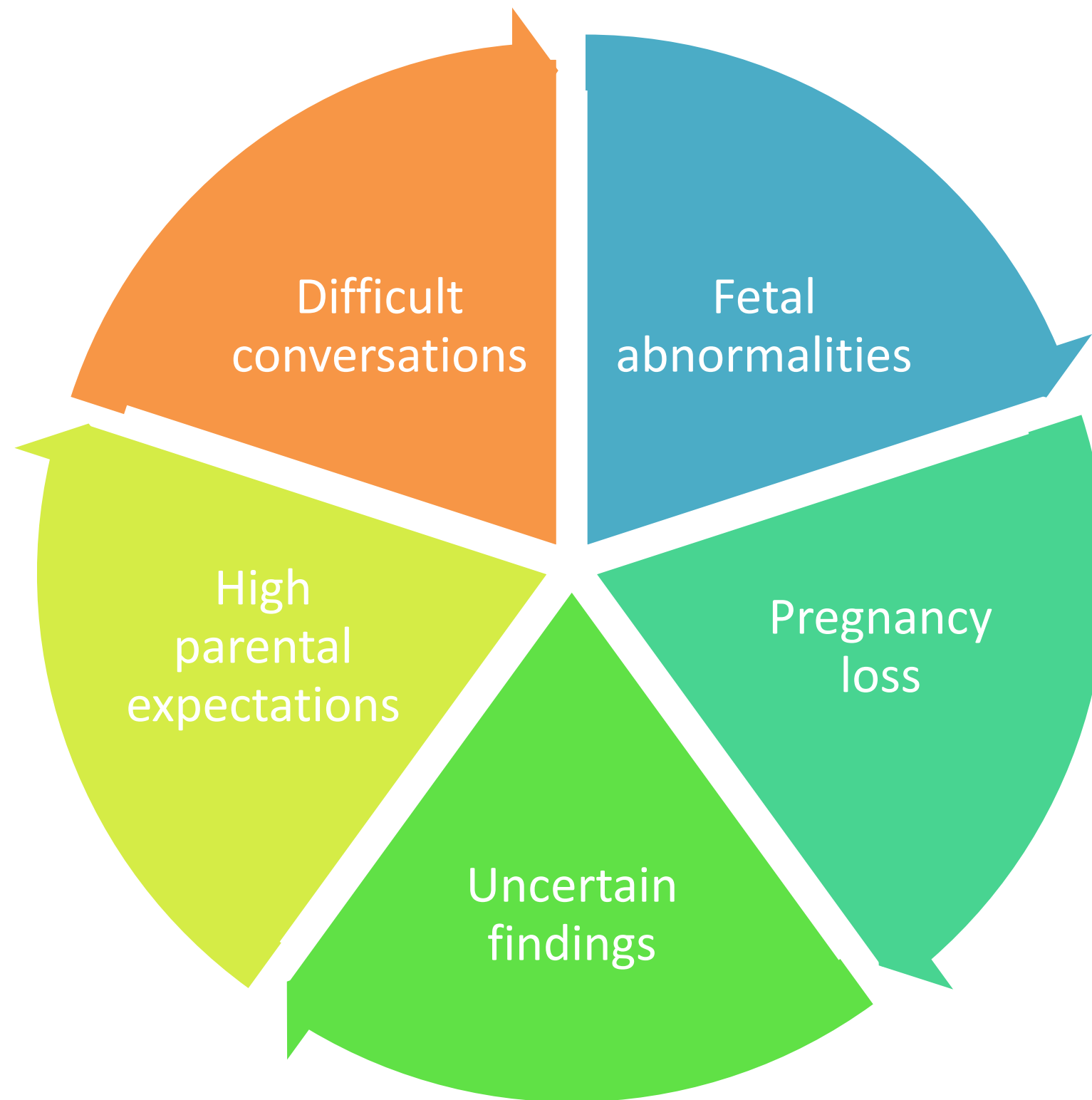


Documentation
requirements



Teaching
responsibilities

Why Obstetric Ultrasound Is Different: Emotionally Demanding Encounters



Compassionate Care: What Does Compassionate Care Mean?

Listening

Empathy

Respect

Reassurance

Communication

Professionalism

The Hidden Cost: Caring Is Not Emotionally Neutral

Repeated exposure to:



Anxiety



Loss



Distress



Uncertainty

Burnout Burnout Is More Than Being Tired



Emotional exhaustion



Feeling overwhelmed



Feeling depleted



Difficulty recovering

Compassion Fatigue: The Cost of Caring



Compassion fatigue develops through repeated exposure to emotional suffering and distress.



Highly compassionate healthcare professionals may be particularly vulnerable.

Why Study Burnout in Sonography? Existing Concerns



High emotional exhaustion



Significant stress



Retention concerns

**Research Aim
Understanding
the Relationship
Between**

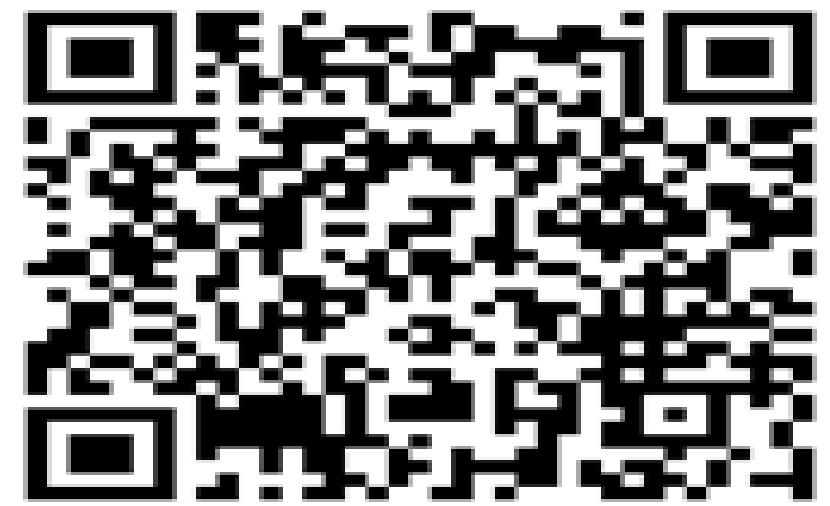
Burnout

Compassion fatigue

Employer support

Workforce factors

Study Methodology: Overview



UK-wide survey

176 sonographers

ProQOL instrument

Cross-sectional design

Who Responded? Workforce Snapshot

67.6% female

90.9% NHS

Experienced
workforce

Multiple specialities
represented

The Headline Finding



99%



**Reported at least mild burnout and compassion
fatigue symptoms.**

Severity Matters: Burnout Severity

1% low

73% mild

26%
severe

Constant Pressure: What Participants Told Us



65.3% reported feeling under constant work pressure.



For many sonographers pressure has become normal.

Running on Empty Fatigue Findings



38.6% often felt run down



17.1% felt run down very often

A Concerning Finding: Talking About Burnout



**71.6% FELT EMPLOYERS DID NOT
ENCOURAGE OPEN CONVERSATIONS
REGARDING BURNOUT.**



**QUESTION: HOW CAN WE SOLVE A
PROBLEM THAT PEOPLE FEEL UNABLE
TO DISCUSS?**

Access to Support: Available Resources



Counselling



Employee assistance programmes



Peer support



Wellbeing resources

Feeling Supported

Only 28.4%: Felt adequately supported by their employer.

Support is only meaningful if staff feel able to access and benefit from it.

The Most Surprising Finding Empathy Remained High



Despite high burnout scores:



Compassion remained strong



Professionalism remained strong



Patient-centred care remained strong

What Does This Mean?



Sonographers Continued Caring, despite experiencing significant fatigue and burnout symptoms.



The workforce is protecting patient care, often at personal cost.

Compassion at Personal Cost: The Hidden Risk



Maintained empathy may hide workforce distress.



Patients still receive excellent care.



But the professional delivering that care may be struggling.

What Drives Severity?

Significant
associations were
identified with:

Employer support

Region

Experience

Gender

Employer Support Was the Strongest Predictor Key Finding



**THE STRONGEST ASSOCIATION
WITH BURNOUT SEVERITY WAS
PERCEIVED EMPLOYER SUPPORT.**



THE WORKPLACE MATTERS.

Burnout Is Not Just an Individual Problem

Traditional View: "People need to become more resilient."



Evidence-Based View:
"Systems need to become more supportive."

**The Job Demands-
Resources Model:**

Burnout Develops When
Demands exceed available
resources, Examples:

Workload

Staffing shortages

Emotional burden

Lack of support

Why This Matters for Patients

A healthy workforce
supports:



Better communication



Better patient experiences



Staff retention



Sustainable services

What Can Departments Do?

Immediate Actions



Regular wellbeing discussions



Peer support



Debriefing



Protected breaks



Reflective practice

What Can Managers Do?

Focus Areas

Psychological
safety

Open
conversations

Compassionate
leadership

Early
intervention

What Can Organisations Do? Priorities



Accessible counselling



Effective wellbeing pathways



Realistic workloads



Better recovery opportunities

What Can Professional Bodies Do? National Leadership



Advocacy



Guidance



Research



Workforce wellbeing strategies

Future Research: Next Steps

National studies

Longitudinal studies

Intervention studies

Qualitative research

Five Take-Home Messages



BURNOUT IS
WIDESPREAD.



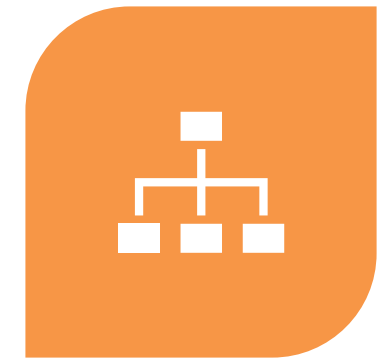
FATIGUE IS
COMMON.



COMPASSION
REMAINS STRONG.



EMPLOYER SUPPORT
MATTERS.



ORGANISATIONAL
ACTION IS ESSENTIAL.

Final Reflection: Sonographers Continue Delivering Compassionate Care



That is something to celebrate.



But it is also something we should never take for granted.



The goal should not be helping people survive difficult systems.



The goal should be creating systems that help people thrive.

Thank You



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