

COVID-19 and the training community; the Hull experience

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COVID has dramatically affected us all in many ways. COVID presented many stresses including extra stress on our training community. For most, hands-on training ceased and attention was pulled in the direction for redeployment. Those with plain film experience were redeployed to help their radiographer colleagues, while registrars found their time consumed by reporting chest X-ray and CT examinations required to monitor complications associated with the COVID-19 virus.

Uncertainty surrounding PPE guidelines, social distancing and the risk of taking the virus home caused huge anxiety amongst many healthcare workers. Stress amongst trainees was exacerbated with changing regulations - trainees being asked to stay home and an uncertainty regarding the continuity of university courses. Cessation of routine diagnostics meant reduced practice. Switching to online learning presented not only IT challenges, but also meant that vital peer support was reduced, lecturer support was reduced and increased distractions in the home environment likely disrupted the learning process. Social distancing in the work environment created difficulty for developing interpersonal relationships with colleagues due to restricted numbers being allowed in social areas.

However, despite the doom and gloom, there have been some invaluable experiences. Community and team spirit amongst NHS colleagues provided a nurturing and supportive environment for trainees. Social distancing has meant the need for longer appointment times, allowing longer one-to-one teaching time, more time for report practice and more time for thought processes and questioning to consolidate knowledge.

Social distancing has allowed a reset in the obstetrics setting; with only one or no persons accompanying patients to their scans. As such, obstetrics environments are calmer now with fewer distractions. COVID has diversified the way teaching is delivered; there has been more opportunity for support academically, for example where lists were not filled to capacity mentors were able to provide teaching sessions about report writing and exam practice. Flexibility in working hours maximised training experience; having trainees work on a weekend/evening where machines are less utilised allowed for freedom for list management and unpressured practice. All of these lessons learned will be invaluable to training in the future.