

In this issue

The articles in this issue are all dedicated to the research agenda in radiotherapy. The seven original articles, collectively discuss a wide range of issues relating to research and its importance in developing our understanding and enhancing knowledge to better inform practice development in the rapidly changing environment of the radiotherapy workplace. This issue is completed by a lively book review undertaken by Pete Bridge, on the second edition of the textbook: *Radiotherapy: principles to practice*. This is a manual for quality in radiotherapy treatment delivery authored by Sue Griffiths and published by Medipex Ltd, Leeds, UK.

RESEARCH IN PRACTICE

The first article by Heidi Probst and Rachel Harris is aimed at those with limited or no previous experience of research or those wanting to develop their research capabilities. The article will also be of value to those who require an aide memoir of the research process before embarking on another research project. The authors focus on why it is important to undertake research and what skills are needed to participate in research; in addition, they undertake a brief discussion of the research process and highlight some of the key points to consider when applying for research funding.

In the second article, Wright, Hilder and Schneider-Kolsky present their research findings into the current status of Australian radiation therapy research. In order to represent this national overview, the authors conducted a survey relating to research activities across all clinical centres in Australia. In this article, the authors highlight the challenges associated with implementing research and identify the important role the professional body and

universities play in providing academic and funding support.

RESEARCH AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP AND NETWORKING

In the third article, Hazel Thornton examines the importance of research and outcomes that directly impact on the quality of the patient experience. The author uses her own experiences to highlight the importance of undertaking research that is undertaken in partnership with others, including the patient, so that experiences can be shared and better inform the direction of the research process. The author gives some good examples of where and how researcher and patient partnership working has developed and evolved over the last 15 years. Thornton concludes that patient's involvement in research is essential if treatments are to be improved.

In the fourth article, Gillian Heap and Nicola Stones reinforce the importance of networks in order to deliver research and they discuss the importance of the role of the Academic Clinical Oncology and Radiobiology Research Network (ACORRN) in the UK, in facilitating the work of research radiographers. The authors discuss the role of ACORRN within the radiotherapy and radiobiology research community, as well as the functions and contributions of the ACORRN working parties, which include research radiographers, research topic specific networks and an interactive website.

TAKING RESEARCH FORWARD IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

In the article presented by Penelope Engel-Hills, the author examines the issues relating

to undertaking research in radiation therapy in Africa. In this article, the author outlines the different situation and challenges for undertaking research in countries across Africa, in contrast to developed countries. The author sets the research agenda in context, as the region is under resourced and both service and research are challenged by lack of equipment, poor maintenance, inadequate funding, inconsistent consumable supplies, and a scarcity of competent professionals to ensure optimal use of what is available and to deal with excessive workloads. This context has led to a poor research infrastructure and practice. The author discusses the role of the radiation therapists in the research environment, the barriers to and benefits of research and the need to identify the current and future research strategies and priorities.

THE ROLE OF THE THERAPEUTIC RADIOGRAPHER (RADIATION THERAPIST) IN THE RESEARCH AGENDA IN THE UK

In the sixth article, Rachel Harris and Charlotte Beardmore discuss the research agenda and the role of the therapy radiographer, from the UK's College of Radiographers perspective.

The authors outline the influences on current radiotherapy practice and the key role that therapy radiographers have in the management of cancer care and the delivery of treatments. They argue that the changes in societal and scientific understanding will demand that the most appropriate and evidence-based care is provided for patients, underscoring the need for evidence through research, to underpin every aspect of daily work if patient outcomes are to continue to improve. They conclude that research must become a fundamental component of everyday radiotherapy practice as it will verify professional standards of care and sustain the future of the profession.

In the final article, Julie Davis and Christine Rawlings explore the research agenda and the extent of the role of the therapeutic radiographer in research in the UK. They identify that currently 70 radiographers are undertaking research (2.5% of the UK profession), and that research activity is being performed to develop new techniques or protocols for new technologies and service development. They conclude that active participation in research is leading to a culture change, with therapy radiographers (radiation therapist) becoming an integral part of the research process, ensuring improved standards of care focussed on evidence-based practice.