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Preparing students for collaborative practice in radiotherapy: a case study

Ms Cláudia Lopes Coelho, Radiotherapist / Lecturer, University of Aveiro, Portugal

Radiotherapy is delivered within complex healthcare environments where effective collaboration between professions is essential. However, in many clinical training settings, students have limited opportunities for direct interprofessional interaction. As a result, they often experience only the radiation therapist's perspective, with minimal collaboration with radiation oncologists, medical physicists and nursing teams.

This exploratory case study examines how autonomy-oriented clinical placements in radiotherapy contribute to interprofessional readiness and to the development of important competencies that support future collaborative practice. The study draws on a case-centred clinical education model implemented with students pursuing the final-year of the Medical Imaging and Radiotherapy undergraduate programme.

Findings indicate that, although direct interaction with multiple professions was limited, the structure of the placement fostered key competencies associated with collaborative practice, including autonomous case management, communication within the clinical team, situational awareness and understanding of professional roles along the patient pathway. Variability in students' workflow integration also highlighted structural barriers, such as scheduling constraints and departmental organisation, that restrict more comprehensive preparation for interprofessional environments. For academic institutions and clinical departments, recognising and addressing these limitations is essential for designing realistic strategies to strengthen interprofessional learning, enhance the quality of clinical education and better prepare students for the dynamic and multidisciplinary nature of radiotherapy services.