

Letter to the editor

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Dear Editor

I was very interested to read the article by Pattinson and Jessop.¹ They rightly acknowledge the requirement for radiographers in promoting health improvement among cancer patients and give an insightful overview of the therapy radiographer's role in this area. However, it is disappointing to read through their findings that there is a need for more health promotion practices to be undertaken among radiographers. Particularly in areas including alcohol cessation, healthy eating and exercise promotion.¹ This is an area that needs addressing, especially with the World Cancer Research Fund recommending that cancer survivors follow recommendations for cancer prevention which include following a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, avoiding alcohol and taking regular physical activity.²

Radiographers are an integral part of the health force in driving improvements in health and wellbeing as outlined in the recent Allied Health Professional public health strategy.³ Initiatives developed to support radiographers in promoting health improvement is illustrated through the implementation of Making Every Contact Count (MECC), which enables the opportunistic delivery of brief health and wellbeing advice to patients.⁴ However, it is evident that not all radiographers are MECC and there is therefore capacity to further promote the importance of health promotion among radiographers.

Identified barriers among therapy radiographers in supporting patients with positive lifestyle changes include uncertainty surrounding job responsibility, radiographer knowledge and training.¹ These barriers have been cited elsewhere among other oncology healthcare professionals.^{5–7} With reported barriers also believing that giving advice was not part of their role, unaware of guidelines, lack of support and knowledge.^{5–7}

One contributing factor to these reported barriers and lack of health improvement practices among radiographers within the oncology setting may be that research addressing this area is disseminated through journals for the profession of other healthcare groups and professionals with a direct role in diet and exercise support. Therefore, it is likely the radiography workforce do not read these journals and are therefore not aware of research advancements in the area of oncology and healthy lifestyle practices.

In order to support the implementation of MECC within the radiotherapy department using different methods to disseminate this information is vital. Continuous professional development (CPD) plays a major factor in supporting role development and increased knowledge among radiographers. One way to help address these barriers is to support the post registration workforce through CPD by disseminating relevant articles in journals that are applicable to radiographers. Addressing the reported barriers can be partly achieved through the publication of review articles and primary research on lifestyle activities among cancer survivors, to further disseminate emerging evidence to the radiography force about health promotion within the oncology setting.

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Although early work has been done through the publication of articles addressing current practices as illustrated by Pattinson and Jessop¹ there is opportunity within this setting to educate radiographers about health promotion and the current best practice regarding lifestyle behaviours and cancer outcomes.

References

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