

3rd International Conference on

Radiology and Imaging

August 24-26, 2015 Toronto, Canada

The experiences of radiographers working with PACS and RIS in Gauteng

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Purpose: Conventional film and paper based radiology departments have been replaced by information technology at a rapid rate internationally. The leading technology is the Picture Archiving and Communication Systems (PACS) and Radiology Information System (RIS). The necessity to follow global trends has become more apparent in Africa. South Africa is experiencing a chronic shortage of radiographers, making the retention of radiographers a national priority. As the implementation of PACS and RIS requires a change in job description for radiographers, a study to assess the experiences of the South African radiographers working with this technology was warranted.

Objectives: To explore and describe the experience of radiographers using PACS and RIS in Gauteng, South Africa and to develop guidelines to facilitate the job satisfaction of radiographers in a PACS and RIS driven radiology department.

Method: The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. For the first quantitative phase the researcher collected data from the radiographers employed at six diagnostic radiology practices which had implemented the PACS and RIS technology in the form of self-formulated questionnaires. For the second phase the researcher interviewed a few of the information rich radiographers who participated in the first phase of the data collection in focus groups.

Results: 85 (68%) radiographers responded to the questionnaires. The private practices contributed to 69% of the responses. 90.6% of the radiographers had been trained to use the PACS and RIS. 76.4% of the radiographers believe that the PACS and RIS technology has positively changed the working conditions for radiographers and 87% of the radiographers will recommend PACS and RIS to other departments.

Conclusion: The study identified that the radiographers experience PACS and RIS in a positive manner but that strategies could be put into place to further enhance the experience of the radiographers.

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