

FINAL JOURNAL ENTRY

As I look back on this year, I'm still taken aback by how rapidly the time has passed by. I still remember clearly the first Rad Prac lecture on the 19th February 2011. We all registered for this program each having our own agenda's or reasons. Personally I feel that a diploma is not sufficient and I would like to continue furthering my qualification for personal gratification as well as being clinically competent in this ever evolving field of radiography. My expectations included gaining the required background theoretical knowledge on the key areas (advanced modalities) in radiotherapy which would enable me to perform efficiently in the clinical setting. Being clinically competent and abreast with the advances in the field, I am able to perform independently, confidently, communicate and share ideas and knowledge at a professional level with other members of the oncology team, which ultimately leads to enhanced levels of service delivery and patient satisfaction.

Although Rad Prac is not discipline specific per se, it has been structured in such a way that the subject content is relevant to all fields or is modified for each discipline. The learning outcomes for this subject included a wide range of critical areas such as presentation of data, advances and future trends in the field of radiography, development of equipment and quality assurance. Being able to present data orally or in the form of posters equips us with the necessary skills and provides the platform and exposure which is beneficial when presenting at congresses or seminars, in the future. Hopefully we will be presenting the results of our research at local and international conferences.

The e-learning structure of this course provides up to date web-links and information that is readily available at anytime and anyplace. This method forces us to engage with, critically analyse and evaluate the information. I was quite impressed with the relevance and quality of the information that was uploaded by the facilitator. The tasks served as a means of directing our learning but the onus was on the student to review the links in order to complete the activities. This strategy of teaching is fairly new to me, as we have mainly been exposed to having a lecturer present the information and all we do is sit back and listen. In a way we have been 'spoon-fed' during the diploma phase as we were provided with most of what we needed so there wasn't too much that we needed to do on our own.

The concept of social constructivism facilitates the process of learning through group interaction, however in the process, we as individuals are also able to construct an understanding of concepts for ourselves. I feel that through this process I was able to communicate, share knowledge, critically evaluate information and gain a greater understanding of what I was learning. There has definitely been a development of collaboration, ability to reason and share knowledge and ideas. Throughout the process of learning we were often asked to reflect and link the theory to the clinically setting. This is the aim of Rad Prac, to ensure that we can apply the skills in our daily work and in the advancement of the profession.

The main strength of this subject is active learning, the whole education system is changing to allow learning to be more meaningful rather than just absorbing or memorising information for an exam. In many cases it is possible to memorise just enough information to pass and therefore qualify, but this process of learning means that very little of what is learnt is actually understood. The quality of the learning and the journey towards the qualification and competence is of utmost importance.

Meeting (physically) once a month was complemented by blackboard which provided important updates, notices and useful resources to enhance the learning process. I have to be honest, in that I've never utilised the chat tool to its fullest or uploaded articles into the web-links or media library tab. Although I preferred corresponding with the facilitator and other students via email or blackberry messenger. For me, Safeassign is a relatively new tool with great benefits in terms of highlighting plagiarism, not so much to punish but to highlight and thus prevent or reduce plagiarism. Bringing in specialists from the specific disciplines or arranging for us to gain hands on experience with techniques such as IMRT and Stereotactic Radiosurgery made the learning all the worthwhile. It was much easier being able to visualise and comprehend rather than being bombarded with all the theory and very little practical exposure. One of the themes were the advances in the field, I can confidently say that I now understand where we've come from in terms of technology and techniques, where we are presently and where we are heading to.

The purpose of the clinical log books is to ensure that we gain adequate exposure to the specific modalities and are clinically competent in these areas. It is our responsibility to make arrangements to complete these procedures, however due to

internal policies or 'politics' with departments there is often some obstruction/resistance to the process of learning. As a suggestion, I think that the directive or mandate needs to come from the institution stating the B-Tech students should be exposed to particular areas as part of the outcomes of the course. When a modality is not available at the centre where you are based and you then make arrangements to visit another department, I should not be viewed as an employee of another department but rather as a DUT student. When you make the time and effort to complete certain outcomes and there is constant obstruction, then this can be extremely de-motivating. A review of specific outcomes in the clinical logbook is necessary as there are a few techniques which are not available in KZN or South Africa.

Another eye opener is the importance of 3D (cross sectional) imaging and image evaluation at diploma level for disciplines other than diagnostic. A lot of what we've learnt about CT and MRI anatomy is from being thrown in the deep end in the clinical environment. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however the 'ground work' or basic background information is lacking. Imaging and image interpretation is vital in radiotherapy planning and treatment verification. With the advances in imaging modalities and treatment planning capabilities for image co-registration/fusion, identification and understanding of the anatomy is vital.

I am most impressed by the quality of the resources available on blackboard, for the other disciplines (Therapy and Ultrasound) this represents wide reading by the facilitator and liaison with specialists to ensure relevant subject matter is uploaded. The amazing technological skills of the facilitator has allowed for the effective use of blackboard as a teaching and learning tool. In a way this was a little intimidating as this meant we also need to spruce up our technological abilities, especially with PowerPoint presentations. It can be challenging trying to present an 'all inclusive' well balanced/holistic program to students from 3 different disciplines. Being able to communicate with the facilitator via all mediums (blackboard, email, BBM) was great and the timeous response to any queries, made life quite easy. Being allowed drafts for assignments, provided some idea if we were on the right track and a sense of security/confidence. This did mean additional marking for the facilitator, but definitely assisted in guiding me in the right direction. The subject content was relevant and

beneficial and empowers the student with a range of skills to perform clinically as well as encouraging self directed and lifelong learning. Overall, a job well done.

Being asked to reflect on a monthly basis, initially seemed like a tedious and sometimes and annoying task. However as the months passed, I was able to appreciate the value of this process...and here I am reflecting on the entire year, this time with more enthusiasm and pleasure.

Deciding on completing the B-Tech syllabus in a year, was manageable, yet quiet demanding. Having to work, study, attend lectures, group meetings, ect can be overwhelming at times, but I am grateful to the Almighty, friends, colleagues, family, academic staff and all those who supported or assisted me in attaining my goal.

You have definitely thought us how to learn, and I am strongly considering pursuing a Master's Degree next year.

“Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible and achieves the impossible”