

UWE Bristol is first UK university to run innovative radiotherapy module

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UWE Bristol is working with University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust to deliver the first university devised module in Brachytherapy, a form of radiotherapy. The new module addresses a growing need for specialised training within this field.

Brachytherapy, from the Greek word meaning 'close to', is a specialised form of therapeutic [radiotherapy](#), which places the radioactive material close to the area to be treated. This is particularly beneficial where the area to be treated is internal and can benefit from a higher dosage of radiation, avoiding affecting the surrounding tissues, or the need to pass through healthy [tissue](#).

A live source of radiation is inserted directly next to the tissue to be treated, and this means that in some instances a high dose treatment

could take forty minutes instead of requiring an overnight stay.

In the UK many radiotherapy centers are moving from low dose rate [brachytherapy](#) to high dose rate or pulsed dose rate treatments. This is changing the nature of patient caseload and staffing groups involved in treatments. Many centres have been appointing brachytherapy radiographers to develop, manage and deliver brachytherapy services.

The new Masters level module, with expert speakers from across the professions provides a recognized qualification in brachytherapy techniques and enhances the education and clinical skills of radiotherapists working in this field, enabling them to meet the increasing need for these services for patients.

Spencer Goodman, programme leader at UWE, explains the benefits of teaching radiotherapists about this form of treatment, “At the moment the caseload of many therapeutic radiographers is increasing. UWE has developed the academic side of this programme, but it is delivered within the clinical environment, and the assignments carried out by those undertaking this course are relevant to the workplace. This means the course can have a direct benefit in their clinical roles, and ultimately can benefit patients.”

UWE academic staff worked closely with Kate Love (Radiotherapy Services Manager) and Pauline Humphrey (Consultant Radiographer) at Bristol Haematology and Oncology Department to design and deliver the module.

Pauline Humphrey says, “By combining practical learning in a clinical environment with a written assignment students will be able to gain real insight into brachytherapy services and use this knowledge to improve their own services in the future.”

The 20 Credit Masters module is entitled 'Brachytherapy Principles and Clinical Applications'. This is the first time such a module has been run in the UK addressing a real need within the field of therapeutic radiography. The course is aimed at health care professionals working within the field of oncology, having an interest in the role of brachytherapy in the management of cancer patients.

Provided by University of the West of England

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