

Only clinically qualified medical physicists should be allowed to work in hospitals to avoid dangerous errors

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In a Comment linked to *The Lancet* Physics Series, Dr Ahmed Meghzifene (Division of Human Health, International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna, Austria) cautions that only physicists with the correct clinical training should be allowed to work in hospitals, in order to avoid dangerous and fatal mistakes. He adds that "much needs to be done to ensure full recognition of medical physics as a profession, especially in some regions of the world."

He adds: "In many countries where the profession is not officially recognised, the recruitment and employment of medical physicists are often listed under various other designations, such as technician, bio-medical engineer, or research assistant. The inadequate recognition of medical physicists has a direct effect on their socioeconomic and professional role in health-care teams."

Dr Meghzifene also cautions that some people are going into jobs without the specialist clinical physics training they need. He says: "some universities award medical physics diplomas (undergraduate and postgraduate) on completion of a theoretical course-related curriculum with no practical clinical training. Graduates with this type of diploma are recruited by some hospitals and allowed to work in a clinical environment. Such recruitments are made solely on the basis of the diploma and could lead to serious errors that, especially in [radiation oncology](#), could lead to severe (and sometimes fatal) misadministration

of [radiation doses](#) to patients...International organisations, such as the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) (IAEA), the International Organisation for Medical Physics, and WHO are working together to harmonise professional qualifications; but urgent action should be taken by health authorities to ensure that the profession is fully recognised and that only clinically qualified medical physicists are authorised to work in hospitals."

He concludes: "A fully recognised medical physics profession, coupled with well-defined education and training requirements, will certainly attract more people to the field and alleviate the shortage of medical physicists that prevails in many countries. These efforts are supported by the IAEA and will contribute to enhanced safety and improving the effectiveness of diagnosis and treatment."

Provided by Lancet

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