Physician Associate role in Interventional Radiology
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Who are Physician Associates?
The Faculty of Physician Associate (FPA) definition: Physician Associates (PA) are medically trained, generalist healthcare professionals, who work alongside doctors and provide medical care as an integral part of the multidisciplinary team. Physician associates are practitioners working with a dedicated medical supervisor, but are able to work autonomously with appropriate support.

There are 2486 PAs working across the UK from the FPA 2020/21 census, of which there are currently only 2 working in IR.¹

The IR PA role at the RBFT

- Ultrasound-guided procedures
- Manage patients pre & post procedure
- 2-stage informed consent
- Collating Mortality & Morbidity data
- Scrub assistant
- Vascular access
- Research and clinical audits
- Quality & policy

Advantages of having a PA
- Continuity of care
  - Usually work 9-5 Mon-Fri
- Cost effective (see Table 1)
  - Net saving of £14,000/year
- Versatile skillset can fit the needs of the department
- Permanent team member
- Relieve consultant workload

Challenges
- New role
  - Training plan and support
- Indemnity
  - Trust approved SOPs
- Legally unable to prescribe or request ionising radiation
- GMC regulation of PAs expected late 2024
- Patient and colleague education on PAs

Suprapubic catheterisation (SPC) clinic
At the RBFT over the last 6 months, April to October 2022, we have inserted 62 SPCs under local anaesthetic using the S-Cath system (Seldinger technique). 50 were inserted by the IR PA and the majority as a day case.
- 100% technical success rate of attempted SPCs
  - x1 case rescheduled for conscious sedation
- 1.6% complication rate – x1 grade 2 CIRSE complication

Table 1 above shows that the Interventional Radiology Physician Associate saves 1320 consultant hours and 620 nursing hours per year. Taking into account the expense of a full-time Band 7, the financial savings would be approximately £14,000 based on the average earnings of an IR consultant and Band 5 nurse.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultant workload</th>
<th>Hours per week</th>
<th>Hours per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical reviews including handover, patient management &amp; discharge</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultrasound clinics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, audits and reviews</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing workload</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angio scrub &amp; circulate</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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References