

HENRE — Higher Education Network for Radiography in Europe

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Introduction

HENRE — The Higher Education Network for Radiography in Europe is a very useful educational initiative, co-ordinated by St Martins College, Ambleside, England, and co-financed by the European Commission. As its name indicates, it is directed mostly at radiography students, but the author believes, that this initiative could also be very interesting for the community of nuclear medicine technologists.

The aim of HENRE is to enable European radiographers to liaise with each other about the role and position of radiography in uniting Europe and to develop and improve standards of radiographers' education and practice. HENRE is now entering its third year as an EU funded Thematic Network in the Socrates: Erasmus programme.

HENRE is essentially directed to the countries of the European Union, but also to the delegates either from countries of the European Economic Space like Iceland and Norway, or countries applying for EU membership, like Romania or Turkey which are also involved in the project. Membership is open to all institutes of higher education and clinical departments offering radiography education and training. At present more than 60 institutions are participating in the project, including for instance the British, Cypriot, Czech, Estonian, Greek, French, Icelandic, Portuguese and Turkish Societies of Radiographers as well as numerous institutions directly or indirectly involved in the education of radiographers, like medical universities, colleges or schools in: Vienna (Austria), Brussels (Belgium), Aalborg, Copenhagen and Odense

(Denmark), Tallinn (Estonia), Pirkanmaa and Oulu (Finland), Paris (France), Bielefeld, Essen, Gelsenkirchen, Koblenz, Munich (Germany), Alexandropolis and Athens (Greece), Eindhoven (Holland), Budapest (Hungary), Florence (Italy), Kaunas (Lithuania), La Valletta (Malta), Bergen and Oslo (Norway), Gdansk, Lodz and Warsaw (Poland), Coimbra (Portugal), Cluj Napoca and Iasi (Romania), Bratislava and Trnava (Slovakia), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Göteborg, Lund, Jonkoping and Stockholm (Sweden), Ambleside, Robert Gordon University, Salford University, University of Hertfordshire, Suffolk College (United Kingdom) and many others. International Society of Radiographers & Radiological Technologists (ISRRT) is also a partner member via the European Committee of Radiographers & Radiological Technologists (ECRRT).

Two main goals of HENRE are the development of the European dimension in radiographic education and the mapping and identification of radiographers continuing professional development (CPD). These are not easy tasks. Firstly, the ways to become a radiographer vary tremendously from country to country [1]. As well as this, the situation in the training of medical students in diagnostic imaging is equally messy [2]. Many countries have introduced radiography training at university level with BSc or MSc programmes, many others have not. Some countries (e.g. Lithuania) do not have special radiography training at all. Also CPD varies — even more from country to country. For identifying the current state and to propose the future guidelines, three sub-groups have been set, with the following tasks:

I. Subgroup 1 — the European dimension in radiography education — initial radiography training

- to explore and identify the nature of radiographic education across Europe;
- to identify the learning outcomes of radiographic programmes at Bachelor level;
- to develop a peer review system for radiography education;
- to facilitate the interaction and integration of the Eastern and Central European region;
- to review quality assurance mechanisms and benchmarks for radiographic education and to disseminate such information.

II. Subgroup 2 — the development of learning and teaching methods used in radiographic education including e-learning, active learning and Context/Problem Based Learning (C/PBL) opportunities:

- to explore the learning and teaching methods so as to develop best practice;

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- to develop an informative website on Active Learning and Context/Problem Based Learning (C/PBL) in radiographic education;
- to explore the extent to which e-learning opportunities are used within radiography education, including, if applicable, the use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE);
- to develop a collaborative e-learning project.

III. Subgroup 3 — development of continuing professional development in relation to the use of different imaging modalities and role expansion:

- to develop a forum for the exploration of the work practices of radiographers;
- to identify the continuing professional development (CPD) of radiographers;
- to explore the reasons for staff shortages and the way in which the educational provision can address the issue.

The project works either in the form of Annual General Meetings (AGM) or Subgroup meetings. AGMs were held in Ambleside (England) and Marsascalea in Malta (see News & Views section), Subgroup meetings have been held in numerous cities across Europe, like Bielefeld, Cluj-Napoca, Dublin, Kaunas, Ljubljana, Oulu, Stockholm, Vienna and others. The author is pleased that the 2005 Subgroup 2 meeting is planned to be held in Gdańsk in June 2005.

Conclusions, commentaries and questions

HENRE is an excellent idea. Something had to be done with harmonising and tuning the education of radiographers — one of the more important paramedic professions. Tributes should be paid to our colleagues from St Martins College, Ambleside, Cumbria, England for undertaking this effort.

Is HENRE perfect? Of course not. Nothing is perfect. The author, a newcomer to the company, was sometimes tired with the

domination of form over content, an abundance of very general-always-true statements and never-ending pile of questionnaires to be filled. The AGM Malta 2004' seemed to be dominated by the UK/Dutch perspective of radiographers' education, with a relative absence of voices of the other big EU countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain). The nuclear medicine technologists community seems to be relatively ignored.

But as Sir Winston Churchill said about democracy: "nobody has invented anything better". The HENRE project tries to introduce some order and guidelines in pre- and postgraduate education and practice of hundreds of thousands of radiographers in Europe. *Chapeaux bas!* Nuclear medicine technologists community (and their teachers too!) should definitely pay more attention to HENRE proceedings and, for instance as the Technologists Section of European Association of Nuclear Medicine do, contribute to its activities.

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