

Title: Towards building a culture of equality, diversity and inclusivity across Radiography research: a foundational template by The *Radiography* EDI Working Group

Authors:

Dr Amy Hancock¹, Dr Helle Precht^{2,3,4}, Dr Marie-Louise Ryan⁵, Dr Ernest Ekpo⁶, Dr Yobelli Jimenez⁶, Dr Theophilus N. Akudjedu⁷.

Affiliations:

1. Department of Health and Care Professions, University of Exeter. UK.
2. Department of Regional Health Research, University of Southern Denmark, J.B. Winsløvs Vej 19, 5000 Odense C, Denmark
3. Department of Radiology, Kolding, Lillebaelt Hospital, University Hospitals of Southern Denmark, Sygehusvej 24, 6000 Kolding, Denmark
4. Health Sciences Research Centre, UCL University College, Niels Bohrs Allé 1, 5230 Odense M, Denmark
5. Radiography and Diagnostic Imaging, School of Medicine, University College Dublin, Ireland
6. Discipline of Medical Imaging Science, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney, Australia.
7. Institute of Medical Imaging & Visualisation, Department of Medical Science & Public Health, Faculty of Health & Social Sciences, Bournemouth University, UK

Guest Editorial:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is an important concept to consider in all aspects of clinical practice and research activities for the medical radiation science (MRS) professions. It is important to examine what is meant by EDI when we consider these parameters in research. Equality is about ensuring people are not treated less favourably based on their characteristics. Diversity is concerned with recognising, valuing, and embracing difference in the broadest sense. Inclusion is a sense of belonging- it is about understanding people's differences and then treating them equally and fairly (1). Parameters that should be considered within these definitions include, but are not limited to, age, civil status, disability, family status, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Remarkable differences are apparent between continents, countries and even within professions. For example, in continents such as Asia, South America and Africa, populations across the countries differ tremendously, with some countries' inhabitants being highly educated and others living a more traditional life (2). European countries such as the Netherlands, Portugal and Great Britain have a long history of social integration and therefore a mix of different ethnicities is recognised within the main population (3). Some countries tend to talk about disability when mentioning EDI as the main issue and clarify the importance of ensuring all people are educated (4,5), whilst some countries focus more on equality on gender grounds. With regard to healthcare, in some countries, traditionally doctors have been the main driver for research and the only clinical professional with a master's level from the university in many countries (6).

There is an urgent need to introduce and champion EDI across all aspects of professional practice including research (7). This recognition led to several initiatives by national and international organisations within the domain of medical imaging practice to provide a pathway and guidelines to support EDI (7,8,9). Yet, the focus of these initiatives relate to clinical practice, and not research. Although, clinical and educational institutions are required to incorporate evidence-based findings informed by EDI principles in their operations, clarity around the responsibilities of academic journals and their editorial boards in relation to managing EDI issues is lacking.

Against this background, the Radiography Journal's EDI Working Group is building foundations for specifying the background and possibilities for defining EDI metrics applicable to Radiography research. The group would provide high level strategic oversight and direction to all EDI activities and related concerns of the journal together with the editorial board and on behalf of the publisher, Elsevier, the owner, the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR) of the United Kingdom, and the European Federation of Radiographer Societies (EFRS) as their official scientific journal. The group represents the International Advisory Board (IAB) of the *Radiography* Journal under Elsevier and the SCoR and the membership at the time of this article include: Dr Amy Hancock and Dr Theophilus Akudjedu (Co-Leads and Associate Editors), Dr Helle Precht, Dr Ernest Ekpo, Dr Yobelli Jimenez and Dr Marie-Louise Ryan (all of the International Advisory Board).

Culture and life experiences can lead to unconscious biases, which may influence human's attitude to different populations and the conduct of research, peer-review, and publication practices (7,8). EDI is crucial to research excellence (9). It involves building and collaborating with diverse research teams and networks, providing opportunities for researchers to explore and integrate different viewpoints in the design and conduct of research, and the interpretation of research findings. It also mitigates bias, supports representation, and incorporates different viewpoints to enhance the quality, integrity, generalisability, and translation of research findings. Thus, the MRS professions of Diagnostic Radiography (DR), Radiation therapy (RT), Nuclear Medicine (NM), and Ultrasound must evolve to incorporate EDI standards and best practices in the conduct, peer-review, and publication of research. To achieve best EDI practices, the MRS profession and research must draw from different perspectives; implement strategies that close the systemic gaps for underserved, underrepresented, and underprivileged people in conducting, publishing, and accessing research evidence; develop and commit to implementing a safe and supportive framework for diverse populations to engage, contribute, share, access mentorship and training opportunities, and receive credit for their contributions. Such a framework will promote responsible, collaborative, equitable, and inclusive research practices in the MRS profession.

Through a series of initiatives, the *Radiography* Journals' IAB will examine the current climate of MRS research published within *Radiography* and across the profession. Our ambition is not only to establish our current position, but to also take forward from our learning any exemplars, which will help us to establish best-practice guidance for practices associated with the conduct of research, peer-review, and publication. Furthermore, we will aim to be accountable in our

research, so that EDI principles and considerations are embedded into our research culture. Our goal is that *Radiography* and MRS professionals will be leaders in a world where EDI principles are considered a standard part of research.

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