Undergraduate Radiology Teaching: Starting from scratch
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Background
In 2014 there were 3239 Consultant Radiologists in the UK comprising 7.8% of the Consultant workforce.([1]) With 247 training posts, radiology is the 7th largest specialist training programme and is more competitive than any of the larger schemes.([2]) It’s therefore vital that undergraduates gain exposure to the specialty at an early stage and understand the rewards and challenges of such a career. The Royal College of Radiologists published an Undergraduate Radiology Curriculum in 2012 as a framework for undergraduate teaching.([3]) Some UK medical schools provide formal undergraduate radiology placements and Leeds Medical School are introducing such a placement in October 2016. To establish whether Leeds was an outlier in such provision, a qualitative study was carried out to ascertain what medical schools currently offer in the UK.

Method
We surveyed all UK medical schools and their associated radiology training schemes by obtaining the following information:
1) Did they have a formal radiology placement? If so, in which year and how long was the placement for? If not, how was radiology taught to their undergraduates?
2) Is radiology incorporated into their undergraduate curriculum?
3) How do they assess radiology in the undergraduate setting?

Results

Queens University, Belfast
✓ 1 week radiology placement in 4th year
✓ Radiology undergraduate curriculum
✓ Formal assessment method: OSCE

Imperial College, London
✓ 5th year radiology medical school placement
✓ Radiology undergraduate curriculum
✓ Formal assessment method: MCQ’s, OSCE

St George’s, University of London
✓ 1 week placement in 2nd year

Plymouth Medical School
✓ 3rd year radiology medical school placement
✓ Medical undergraduate curriculum
✓ Formal assessment method: OSCE

Aberdeen Medical School
✓ 1 week radiology placement in 1st and 2nd year
✓ 2 week radiology placement in 5th year
✓ Radiology undergraduate curriculum
✓ Formal assessment method: MCQ’s, OSCE, Mini-Cex

Sheffield Medical School
✓ 1 week placement in 4th year
✓ Radiology undergraduate curriculum
✓ Formal assessment method: MCQ’s, OSCE, Mini-Cex

In total, 32 medical schools and 38 radiology training schemes were contacted, with response from all but two. There were only six centers which delivered a formal, dedicated placement in radiology for all students (see map above). The medical schools that incorporate a radiology placement include a radiology specific curriculum and formal assessment. Many centers offer a placement for those interested with the equivalent of a special study module. Radiology is also widely taught within other specialty placements and Radiologists often teach within the Medical School in subjects such as anatomy.

Discussion
Following the implementation of the Modernising Medical Careers programme in 2005, trainees need to decide on their future career at an earlier stage.([4]) To inspire the next generation of Radiologists, it is important that they gain exposure to the specialty as an undergraduate. There is a wide variation of undergraduate provision in the UK, but relatively few formal undergraduate placements. Following several years of negotiations, Leeds Medical School will be introducing a 3rd year placement in radiology including a formal curriculum.

References