

## Focus on radiotherapy

We've been busy of late highlighting [radiotherapy](#) [1] as a fascinating and worthwhile area to work in. Could it be for you?

Two new videos show viewers what it's like to work in [radiotherapy](#) [1] and information about proton beam therapy (for treating specific types of cancer) which will be available in two centres in England from 2018/19.



And head of [radiotherapy](#) [1] [Hazel Rodger's new real-life story](#) [2] shows why she chose this fascinating career and sets out her career path to date.

### Who works in [radiotherapy](#) [1]?

A team of staff work in various roles within [radiotherapy](#) [1]. These include clinical oncologists, therapeutic radiographers, radiography assistants, specialist nurses, and healthcare scientists specialising in [radiotherapy](#) [1] physics.

Clinical oncologists [3] determine which treatment to use by considering a range of factors including tumour type, the site of the tumour, the stage of the disease and the patient's general health. They then assess the relative merits of different treatments before presenting these to the patient so that an informed decision can be made.

“I try to base my decisions on what I would want if our patients were my mum or dad.” [Hazel Rodger]

As a therapeutic radiographer [4], you will work to high levels of accuracy to help ensure the patient's tumour or cancer receives exactly the right dose of radiation, at the same time as ensuring the surrounding normal tissues receive the lowest possible dose.

Radiography assistants [5] support the therapeutic radiographer by ordering stocks of consumable items, helping with procedures, making sure the working environment is clean and hygienic, preparing patients for treatment, inputting data, checking equipment and reporting faults.

Nurses [6] can specialise in working with patients receiving radiotherapy [1] treatment. They may be based in a specialist oncology [7] ward within a hospital or visiting patients in their own home, to provide direct nursing care and support.

Healthcare scientists specialising in radiotherapy physics [8] are responsible for the precision and accuracy of treatments by using advanced computer calculations to develop individual patient treatment plans.

## Getting into a radiotherapy [1] career

Each role within the team has different entry requirements and training. With the exception of staff working in support roles, such as radiography assistants, you will need to go to university and take a degree – and often further specialist training – to work in radiotherapy [1].

The typical skills you'll find within the team delivering radiotherapy [1] include:

- a caring nature
- empathy
- compassion
- a scientific mind
- a methodical and precise approach

## What is radiotherapy [1]?

One in three of us will be diagnosed with cancer in our lifetime but cancer survival is its highest ever.

A range of procedures are used to diagnose and treat cancer as well as initiatives to encourage people to reduce the risk of getting cancer in the first place.

**Radiotherapy** [1] uses doses of x-rays and other ionising radiation to treat medical conditions - mainly cancer and tumours. It is also used to treat non-cancerous tumours and other conditions, such as thyroid disease and some blood disorders.

New forms of treatment are being developed all the time and **proton beam therapy** [9] is a new specialist form of **radiotherapy** [1] treatment which will be available through the NHS in England from 2018.

## Find out more

- Visit our role pages about [clinical oncologists](#) [3], [specialist nurses](#) [6], [therapeutic radiographers](#) [4], [radiography assistants](#) [5] and [healthcare scientists specialising in radiation physics and radiation safety physics](#) [10].
- Watch our [video about careers in radiotherapy](#) [11] and an informative [video about proton beam therapy](#) [12].
- The new NHS proton beam therapy service will be available at:
  - [The Christie NHS Foundation Trust](#) [13] (The Christie) in Manchester from 2018
  - [University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) [14] (UCLH) from 2019

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/news/focus-radiotherapy>

### Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Radiotherapy>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/radiographer-therapeutic/real-life-story-hazel-rodger>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-oncology>

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/radiographer-therapeutic>

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/radiography-assistants-and-imaging-support-workers>

[6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>

[7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Oncology>

[8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physical-sciences-and-biomechanical-engineering/radiotherapy-physics>

[9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/news/range-staff-needed-administer-new-cancer-treatment>

[10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physical-sciences-and-biomechanical-engineering/radiation-physics>

[11] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OX8zpT2OTNk>

[12] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MadsdvYOis>

[13] <http://www.christie.nhs.uk/>

[14] <https://www.uclh.nhs.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>