

March 2020



Lockdown!

Lockdown for the nation was announced on the 23rd March 2020 and I was instructed to work from home. This was a sudden decision based on communication from the Scottish Government (SG), and the extreme change resulted in an immediate need for me to change my training to accommodate working from home.

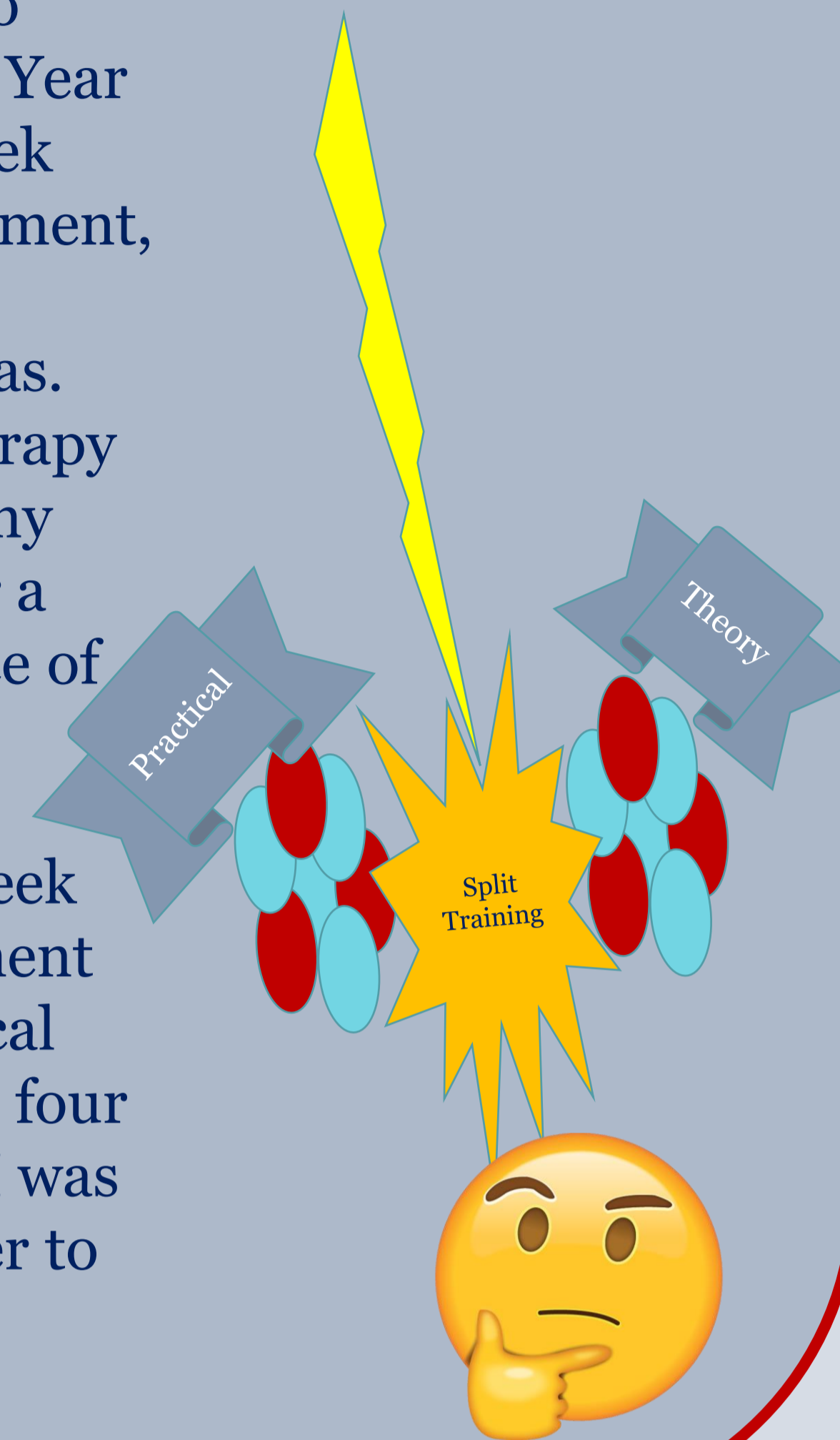


My first decision was to carry out tasks that complemented my training, and I set out to sign myself up for CPD presentations and E-learning modules. I signed up for an NPL course on Radionuclide Calibrator to complement my Nuclear Medicine training. On the plus side, I had a new lunch buddy to keep me company!

A Cunning Plan!

Two-weeks after the suspension of my training, plans were drawn up on how best to adapt my training to the hospital's Covid-19 response. By the start of the lockdown I had managed to complete just over 50% of my Foundation Year training. I was a few weeks into my 10 week placement at the Nuclear Medicine department, but this training was unable to continue because it required working in clinical areas. My final planned placement was Radiotherapy Physics (after Nuclear Medicine), and so my Training Coordinator explored options for a 'split training' approach with the assistance of colleagues in both departments.

Specifically, it was proposed that my 10 week placement with the Radiotherapy department would be split into two parts. All theoretical aspects were to be covered during the first four weeks (remote working from home), and I was then to return back to the Hospital in order to complete the practical training for the remaining six weeks.



Back to Training

Each week had a theme and this complemented the weeks where I was timetabled to be physically in the Radiotherapy department.



I got myself into a routine in the morning by reading various documents relevant for each training aspect, followed by a tutorial with a member of the Radiotherapy physics team in the afternoon using video call. In these calls I was able to discuss what I had read - to help consolidate the information.

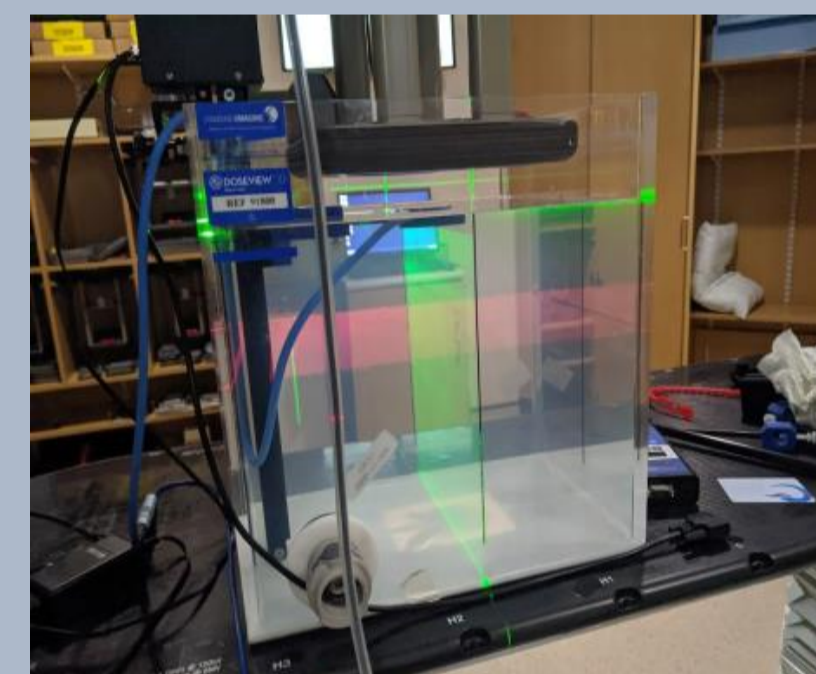


This was an effective way to cover the material and build understanding required for the placement. At times it was challenging to visualise a specific set-up described in the texts, but the Radiotherapy team used photos of the equipment to help me visualise what was being carried out.



The Return of the Trainee

It was planned that I would start back at work in the hospital on 2nd June 2020. This date was pencilled in, with the hope that the SG guidance would have eased the total lockdown by then. Thankfully we were able to move out of full lockdown on 29th May 2020, which was a great relief!



Starting back at the hospital enabled my training progression to gain momentum again. I had to adjust to new working practices involving social distancing, restricted room access and altered travel to/from work in order to ensure that patients, colleagues and I were kept safe. However I was able to get 'hands on' experience with the equipment I had read so much about and put the theory into practice.

Almost There

I successfully completed my radiotherapy placement as planned and managed to meet almost all of the criteria for the placement.



My final task was to finish the remaining part of my Nuclear Medicine training. This was now possible due to further restrictions having been lifted. With the foundation year portfolio and the mid-way QA assessment looming, the focus of my placement with Nuclear Medicine was to complete as much as possible with the weeks remaining

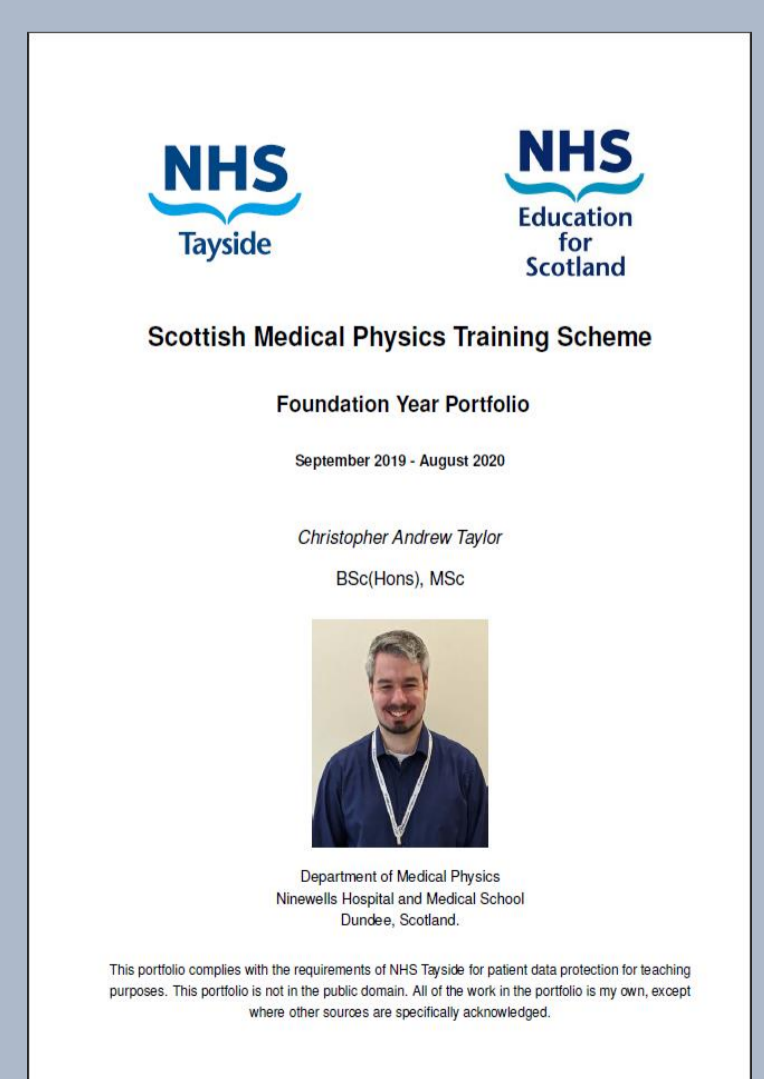
I Made It!

I was successful in completion of my foundation year training. I completed the full 10 weeks for my Radiotherapy placement and 8 of the intended 10 weeks for Nuclear Medicine.



Reflecting back on my experience, it is clear to me that the quick 'split training' action to adapt my training gave me the best experience possible during the pandemic. The success of this approach required rapid response, flexibility and collaborative effort between the trainee, training supervisors and training coordinator. Similar approaches may be useful in the future – e.g. in response to unplanned staff absences, or due to periods of downtime associated with equipment breakdown.

I would like to thank everyone who was involved in adapting my training to meet the challenges of Covid-19



September 2020 (Completion of Foundation year)