Module Leader: Jocelyn Watson

Enhancing Clinical Research in Practice
A competency based academic module

Aims of this poster
1. To share the rationale for developing the first degree level academic post-registration qualification with a clinical component in the UK.
2. To reflect on the early impact of this on the Research Practitioner’s knowledge and skill base.
3. To explore the application in clinical practice of a developed version of the RCN Research Nursing Competency Framework (2).

Rationale for Project
1. Research is a front-line, core service of the NHS (1). The clinical role of the research practitioner (RP) is central to its delivery. The NHS has a rapidly growing workforce of RP’s however, historically their preparation for the role has been diverse and varied.
2. The Peninsula Comprehensive Local Research Network (PenCLRN) values innovation in education and aims to develop a workforce which is flexible and responsive to future service needs.
3. The Lead Research Nurses from the PenCLRN identified a specific education and skills deficit within the RP workforce. To address this, in line with the government drive to invest in clinical academic career development (3), an academic partnership module was developed with Plymouth University.

Project Plan
The first Academic Partnership module started in October 2013. The module was delivered over 8 taught days with a variety of academic assignments utilised to underpin the competencies achieved over a six month period. The competencies are based on the RCN Research Nurse competencies. Students were allocated a mentor to support and assess them. Best Practice Presentations on the final day were given by students to all who had been involved with the module. Students gain 40 credits at Degree level. Collaboration across the PenCLRN was at the heart of this novel educational development with students from the five acute trusts sharing best practice and knowledge while teachers were drawn from the pool of experts from across the SW Peninsula.

Module Evaluation by Learners
• “Academic qualification backs up knowledge and credibility of a research nurse”
• “The only all encompassing research course around”
• “Consolidated all practice and experience”
• “Course more aimed at Band 5 than Band 7”
• “At Band 7 I think we should move towards M level work”
• “Learning opportunities have really helped to enhance my practice”
• “Networking skills have been really valuable”
• “I feel I have gained an enormous amount”

Evaluation of Impact on learners
The module leaders were asked to facilitate an evaluation of impact in the workplace for the first cohort of students. Permission was kindly given by Professor McAlister of the University of Ulster to adapt and use an assessment tool originally intended for assessing students in an industrial placement (4). This tool was used by the student’s line managers to evaluate their performance in the workplace before and after undertaking the module.

Unexpected benefit for all
Students, managers, module leaders and the module teachers have been surprised and delighted by the amount of networking across the Peninsula that engagement with the module has generated. This is helping to embed the sharing of knowledge and practice between our member Hospital Trusts and their multi-disciplinary teams.

Module Development
Feedback from students and mentors has been used to develop the second module with teaching sessions on presentation skills, group facilitation skills, post preparation and publishing workshops being added.

Conclusions
The project has been recommissioned with a second cohort of learners from across the SW Peninsula starting in April 2014. Positive behavioural changes were noted in over 50% of our students. This project has offered the first academic, competency based research accreditation for clinical research staff in the UK and we feel acts as a good foundation from which to shape future educational interventions for research staff.

References

Module Teacher: Kate Tantam

Courage, Compassion, Commitment, Communication, Care, Competence