Putting People at the Heart of the NHS: first year students reflections on the patients journey

CHRISTINE ORGAN, JANINE SCOTT, DR. WENDY MAYNE
Research team:

Kay Currie (Principle Investigator); Sam Bannerman; Val Howatson; Fiona MacLeod; Wendy Mayne; Christine Organ; Dorothee O’Sullivan Burchard; Sarah Renton; Janine Scott.
Aim and background of the study:

“To explore first year nursing students’ practice based learning about service users and carers’ experience of health care”

Curriculum design and development:


- NMC Standards for pre-registration nursing education (2010)

- QAA Enhancement themes (2011-12) - Evaluation of the first year learning experience
**Methods:**

- **A qualitative approach:** documentary analysis of reflective written work submitted by the student participants.
- **Data collection tool:** students’ described learning related to their experiences in relation to; professional roles, communication, person – centredness and the patient journey.

- **Sample:** convenience sampling of the total cohort; 235:428 consenting first year undergraduate students.
- **Thematic analysis:** (Braun & Clark, 2006) enabling reporting of key themes.

- **Data collection:** an additional single page document added to the Practice Learning Assessment Documents.
- **Ethical approval:** was obtained from the School Ethics Approval Committee.
Themes emerging from the study
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Stepping back from learning at a distance

Stepping into learning through interaction

Awareness and application of core values for person-centredness
Theme 1:

‘stepping back from / learning at a distance’
Multidisciplinary team working; Observing stage process and procedure of patient care

“I have worked with a number of different professionals and other departments including consultants, nurses, physios, health care workers and other departments.

“I had a look at some of the admission assessment notes and also helped with an admission by taking the patients height, weight, BP, O2 levels and pulse.”

“... observed senior nurse admit 71 year old male to the ward, learned about assessment and importance of risk assessment i.e. the Waterlow score”

“multi-disciplinary teams work together to ensure patients needs are met”
Learning from patient documentation

“I got the opportunity to read the patient referral letter from her doctor”

“Reading nursing case notes to learn more about patient to develop better understanding - many could not or would not talk”

“I was also allowed to read notes of certain patients to help understand their journey into mental health services,”

“I read about their history and condition so I understand about how care needs are met”
Theme 2:

‘s stepping in to / learning through interaction’
Communication

“I talked to a few patients and found out how they felt about their care in the ward”.

“in order to communicate with clients who have speech problems I have to listen very carefully and repeat what they have said to me so I have understood what they have said”

“it is very important to speak to the patients about their journey and why they are in hospital so you get to know a bit more about them”.

“some patients were not able to communicate a lot due to their illness. It is important to spend time trying to communicate with them and to give them as much attention as any other patient”
Working with family members, shadowing the patient journey

“I took a patient through from admission to transfer; this was an extremely rewarding experience…”

“I was caring for a patient who had slipped on the ice outside and fallen … I tried to be as involved as I could, attending hospital appointments with her and outpatients clinics for X-rays and meetings with the consultant about possible surgery.”

“when communication breaks down family members can become distressed and angered.”

“speaking to parents, listening to their experience and how the experience has been”. 
Theme 3:

‘person-centeredness and core professional values’
Person – centredness and professional values

"ensuring that all patients are treated as individuals and if they make decisions that you don't agree on it is very important that you respect their decision"

"At all times I was aware of patients’ individual needs and requirements, treating them with dignity, respect in a non-judgemental manner"

"Ensuring confidentiality and respect whilst discussing patients on the phone"

"it is part of my duty of care to show fairness and respect to my clients. I adhere to all NMC code of conduct as well as responding sensitively when dealing with patients."

I must treat all clients in a sensitive manner and respect individual choices"
Insight into patient experience; Empowering patients to make choices

“different patients have different experiences within healthcare and that centres around the care they receive from professionals”

“the whole time I was in the ward I fully understood that the patient comes first...they have choices in which they are entitled to make e.g. what time they get out of or go to bed”

"very aware that most patients know more about their health care than I do so have listened to them"

"The patient should be at the heart of decision making regarding their care and actively involved and kept up to date in relation to this"
Discussion / conclusion

- Rich data emerged which shaped the emerging storyline of the students' perceptions of the patients’ journey.

- It became clear that students gained experience of focusing on service users as diverse individuals, acknowledging the need to accommodate differences and promote independence.

- These could be conceptualised as either ‘stepping back from / learning at a distance’ or ‘stepping in to / learning through interaction’.

- Underpinning both of these conceptual categories was consistent use of the language and terminology of person-centeredness and the core professional values of respect, confidentiality, dignity, privacy, and promoting choice, with some data evidencing how these values were applied in practice.

- Students also demonstrated understanding and application of a range of communication strategies required for individualised care.
Recommendations

- The study concludes that student learning and awareness is commensurate with their stage on the programme.

- However, reflection on the service users’ and carers’ experience in these care encounters is less evident.

- A shift from a professional role-centred to person-centred perspective may need encouragement during the students’ remaining journey through the programme.
Bibliography


QAA Scotland 2011 “Enhancement-led Institutional Review” www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/