Developing a workbook for primary care nursing students

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DEVELOPING A WORKBOOK FOR PRIMARY CARE NURSING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article outlines a project on developing a workbook to help nursing students prepare for clinical placements in primary care. This is a summary: the full paper and reference list can be accessed at nursingtimes.net.

There is a continuing need to prepare a nursing workforce that is adaptable within a range of care settings. The faculty of health at Staffordshire University seconded a lecturer practitioner for a 12-month period to conduct an audit on primary care placements. Mentors were involved in the audit in order to include their views and opinions alongside those of students.

The overall aim of the audit was to assess the current effectiveness of primary care placements of pre-registration nursing students. The objectives were to:
- Ascertain whether students and mentors feel prepared for primary care placements;
- Determine the type and format of primary care information that students and mentors would like in preparation for primary care placements;
- Provide recommendations.

Thirty pre-registration nursing students at various stages of their training and 30 mentors from primary care settings affiliated to Staffordshire University were randomly chosen to participate. A postal survey was chosen to ensure anonymity.

Some 53% (16) of nursing students and 50% (15) of mentors returned completed questionnaires. More than half of the students questioned stated that they did not feel prepared or were unsure whether they felt prepared for primary care placements: ‘I had little knowledge of the roles of the primary care team…’
‘I did not feel prepared as I didn’t have any knowledge about my community placement…’

Asked when it would be most useful for information to be delivered, the majority of respondents stated that they would like it before the placement. They were also asked in what format they would like this information. Both students and mentors said they would like an information package that could be referred to within the placement area, supported by taught sessions within the university. Suggestions from respondents relating to information that may be appropriate included:
- Information about agencies/social care within primary care;
- Structure of the NHS within primary care;
- Roles and responsibilities of the primary care team and students;
- Collaborative working, practice environments, communications network;
- Legal and ethical issues pertinent to primary care;
- Clinical skills in wound management.

This audit had limitations – most notably, the sample size of respondents – and therefore the results cannot be widely generalised. However, it did highlight areas for improvement in preparing pre-registration students for primary care placements.

SETTING UP THE PROJECT
A coordinator for primary care development within the pre-registration programme was appointed in the faculty to contribute to curriculum development. A project lead was also appointed to develop a primary care information package/workbook for pre-registration nursing students. A variety of relevant stakeholders were consulted, including mentors, community placement facilitators, nursing students and academic staff from the faculty of health.

DEVELOPING THE WORKBOOK
Community placement facilitators (CPF) were a key link in formulating the content and structure of the workbook. The CPFs formulated mentor packs and encouraged placement areas to have induction packs for students. Although many placement areas had achieved this, there was a wide variation in the content and quality of such packs within the various placements/PCTs.

In delivering an effective workbook, disparity in the placement induction packs was addressed via discussions with the CPFs.

Listening to stakeholder views, using recent relevant literature available and referring to the previous audit results helped to structure the format and topic areas that were to be included in the workbook. This also needed to encompass areas identified as useful by the stakeholders who developed the students’ learning during the placement.

During the first three months of the project much time was afforded to networking and research. Regular monthly meetings with

BACKGROUND
Approximately 15 million people now live with a long-term condition that will require support with self-management or continuous care in the primary care setting (DH, 2006).

Many nursing students continue to visualise ‘nursing’ as focused on hospital/acute care, with clinical placements traditionally focused in acute nursing services (Phillips et al, 2000).

Gopee et al (2004) suggested there is an extensive range of healthcare facilities available that could be used for learning opportunities for students in the primary care setting.

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The information that nursing students felt unprepared for a community placement.

Nursing students would like to have access to more clinical information, particularly during periods of self-directed study. They felt the gaps were in their knowledge of the primary care environment.

As the workbook developed, advice and guidance was sought from key academic staff within the Faculty. Senior lecturers with particular expertise in their field (for example, practice nursing, district nursing, mental health nursing, legal aspects in healthcare) were approached to contribute to specific areas. These staff members were involved in curriculum development and to specific areas. These staff members were involved in curriculum.

The workbook can be used by mentors to facilitate discussion and can be used as a tool/element of PCTs and strategic health authorities. The workbook was designed to reflect the learning outcomes throughout the workbook. It is intended that the workbook will have served its purpose if students were interested in receiving advice on the content and level of activities included in the workbook.

As this workbook is not summatively assessed, all activities are voluntary. It must be available for use each day. As the workbook was not summatively assessed, all activities are voluntary.

As a result of students being interested in receiving advice on the content and level of activities included in the workbook, a guide to the workbook was made available. The guide includes an introduction on using the workbook, an explanation of its usage and expectations.

Future Plans for the Project

The project has attempted to fill an identified gap in the pre-registration nurse training. The workbook will be evaluated as a tool to support mentors in their programme.

We encourage use of the workbook.

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For the full reference list, log on to nursingtimes.net and NT Clinical and Archive and then Clinical Extra.

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