

Easing the transition from classroom to clinical placement

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Content of the session

- Background to the study
- National and International context
- Methodology of study
- Results and analysis
- Conclusions and recommendations

University of Derby

- Post -1992 University.
- Located in East Midlands – approximately 15 miles from Nottingham.
- Size: 20,000 students currently studying with us. 1,700 international students from 120 countries.
- Mission: high quality education, with the personal touch. Research that directly informs our teaching.
- Excellent employability (96.1% last year) for first time, full time programmes.
- Typical first years:
 - Diverse mix
 - 60% non-traditional learners
 - Large number from local area

Aim of the study

A critical evaluation of student radiographers' experience of the transition from the classroom to their first clinical placement.

National and International Context

Existing research includes:

- 'Managing student expectations: what do prospective student radiographers expect from their programme of study at one UK university?' (Hyde, 2013)
- 'Ready or not? How prepared are diagnostic radiography students for their first practice placements?' (Strudwick et al, 2012)
- 'A key transition for student nurses: The first clinical placement experience' (Leducq et al, 2012)
- 'Caring: The socialisation of pre-registration student nurses' (Mackintosh, 2006)
- 'Preparing for practice: An evaluation of an undergraduate social work 'preparation for practice' module' (O'Connor et al, 2009)
- 'Greater than the sum of its parts' (Andrew et al, 2009)
- 'Becoming a nurse: a meta study of early professional socialisation and career choice in nursing' (Price, 2009)

National and International Context

Government and professional policy includes:

- What Works? Student Retention & Success (Thomas, 2012)
- Quality Assurance Agency – UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2012)
- Francis Report on the Mid Staffs Inquiry (2013)
- College of Radiographers reports on student attrition and retention (2013/14)

What We Already Know

- Transition to university can be hard.
- Transition to a work based learning opportunity, such as a clinical placement can be really hard.
- Transport, accommodation, uniforms, work patterns, child care issues, etc.
- Plus nerves!!

Context for the research

- To critically evaluate student experience of this transition.
- Objectives:
 - To investigate how first year students could be better prepared for their first clinical placement.
 - To identify the characteristics that make a student 'placement ready'.
 - To make recommendations for curriculum development that would improve students' transition into their first placement block.

Research Methodology

- Survey approach
- Mixed methods – qualitative & quantitative data
- “Purposive sample” – current 2nd & 3rd students; clinical staff supporting students on placements; academic staff.
- First stage – Questionnaire – student and staff versions
- Second stage – Focus groups with students
 - Semi-structured interviews with clinical and academic staff

Findings

- In general, most students enjoyed their first clinical placement, with 89.5% rating it good or very good.
- Enjoyed working with patients, putting theory into practice & honing their radiographic technique skills.
- View was supported by clinical & academic staff, who perceived students enjoyed their first placement.

Findings

- 3 key themes emerged that caused difficulty for students:
 - Working with clinical staff
 - Working with very ill patients
 - Moving around the Radiography department each week
- Clinical & academic staff tended to focus on more practical issues such as travel, parking, finding their way around etc.

Theme 1: Working with clinical staff

- 17% of questionnaires indicated it could be challenging.
- “I remember asking someone to do an assessment who said ‘Not one of you bloody students again.’ And that was the exact words he used.” Student participant 9
- “I think it’s quite difficult. I had a similar thing at one of the hospitals where one of the seniors actually took me to one side and said ‘Don’t even speak to me, I don’t do first years.’” Student participant 10
- “I think maybe they forget what they felt like when they were doing things for the first time, especially in A&E.” Student participant 13

Theme 1: Working with clinical staff

- Acknowledged by some clinical staff as an issue. Tended to talk about 'difficult characters' in department.
- Academic staff focused on how hard it can be for some students to ask questions or admit they didn't know things.
- Recommendations:
 - Formalisation of mentor system
 - Assertiveness skills training
 - Building resilience in students
 - Use of scenario's to prepare students for practice
 - Close liaison with placement providers

Theme 2: Working with very ill patients

- Questionnaires indicated students enjoyed patient contact and found communication easy.
- However, focus groups identified that very ill patients were challenging.
- Clinical & academic staff perceived that this was linked to life / work experience.
- Students felt it was not.

Theme 2: Working with very ill patients

- “I was asked to go and sit with a young girl who’s got some horrible form of leukaemia and they were putting a hickman line in. And I was standing there chatting with her, she was a lovely girl, and I was struggling. So I went ‘are you looking forward to Christmas?’ and she went ‘Not really, I’m having a bone marrow transplant on Christmas Eve’. And I felt terrible. How do you respond to that?” Student participant 10
- Mature student with considerable previous work experience.

Theme 2: Working with very ill patients

- Recommendations:
 - Building Resilience
 - Additional simulation work in University
 - Use of scenario's to discuss possible issues prior to placement
 - Ward / care environment placement
 - Formalised Debriefing process

Theme 3: Moving around the department each week

- “So it was just trying to make like that first impression, ‘cos you were like in a different room, different machine, each week. So you’d just get your head around it and then on Friday you’d have to leave.”
Student participant 14
- “(By) Thursday I’d just about be feeling comfortable, then comes Friday, and then Monday you’re back somewhere else. With different machines.” Student participant 12

Theme 3: Moving around the department each week

- Identified by all participants as an issues – staff & students.
- Issues around familiarity with equipment.
- Compounded by issues with getting to know staff.
- Recommendations:
 - Change to rota systems
 - Development of mentor's role
 - More clinical staff input into induction
 - Assertiveness training for students

Conclusions

- The study identified that although the transition into the first clinical placement generally goes well for most students, it is certainly not the case for all students.
- Dissonance between theory & practice is a problem.
- An action plan has been developed to implement a number of recommendations for academic practice and support for clinical placement.
- Some recommendations are significant: changes to rota patterns; the development of the role of clinical mentors; clearer debrief process; clearer process to raise concerns.
- Aim: to improve student experience of the first clinical placement.

Further Research

- Locally - to evaluate impact of recommendations.
- National level, to investigate extent of issues.
- Internationally???

Question?

Contact Details

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