

Transition to General Practice Nursing

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Section C - The future - personal and professional development

Chapter 10 - Developing your career in General Practice Nursing

The aim of this chapter is to:

- Consider your confidence and competence in community nursing
- Start to consider your own personal development plan
- Career planning
- Importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

What is the purpose of continuing professional development? The overall aim of CPD is to give all those working with patients the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills in their area of work. For those who are qualified nurses, it is an NMC requirement that at least 40 hours of learning activity relevant to their practice is carried out over a three year period. All qualified nurses must keep a portfolio which is updated on a regular basis, and at least every time a new learning activity has taken place. There is no point just putting together a portfolio of handouts, power points, leaflets and certificates of attendance. This will of course prove that you have attended an update, but it will not demonstrate what you have actually learnt. It is therefore recommended that a reflective account is written following each study day that you attend. Remember you will be required to include 5 reflections on practice that you have discussed with a NMC registrant as a requirement for revalidation.

<http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/revalidation/learning-training-and-sharing-good-practice/>

Attending study days is also an opportunity for you to develop your professional skills and knowledge and may motivate you to continue further education in specialist areas. There may be study days on travel health, child immunisations, tissue viability, chronic obstructive airways disease, diabetes, tuberculosis, public health – the list is endless.

The Standards for Specialist Education and Practice (NMC, 2002) incorporates the exercising of higher levels of judgment, discretion and clinical decision-making in clinical care to enable the monitoring and improvement of standards of care through supervision of practice, clinical audit, the development of practice through research and teaching, the support of professional colleagues and the provision of skilled professional leadership (Boran 2009). In 2004, the NMC created a third part of the professional nurse register for all Specialist Community Public Health Nurses that included General Practice Nursing, School Nurses, Health Visitors and Occupational Health Nurses.

Many Higher Education Institutions and organisations such as the RCGP also offer a variety of validated specialist modules suitable for the General Practice Nurse such as the Management of Long Term Conditions.

The Health Care Assistant (HCA) role has been introduced into General Practice over the past ten years and this body of staff need to engage in the educational process in order to enhance their practice. The Care Certificate was launched in April 2015 and it is expected that every HCA will develop the core standards in the first 12 weeks of their employment. As stated previously 'The Shape of Caring Review'

'There has also been a need to return to the fundamentals of nursing which have been characterised in the 6 'Cs'.'

(2015) recognises that the HCA role is crucial in health care and that HCAs must be valued and encouraged to develop professionally. This may be in the form of access to higher awards, apprenticeships and access to Foundation degrees in health and social care as a pathway towards progression into nursing. An example of HCA competencies for general practice can be found <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/membership/practice-team-resources/~media/F2CFF4485F3E40739BD9C3A27048CBF2.ashx>

Band 5 and 6 practitioners, who may prefer to practice in more generalist roles in primary care are being encouraged to follow new educational programmes, aimed at enhancing clinical skills, knowledge and competencies of the support staff workforce Boran (2009).

For example, since 2011 Buckinghamshire New University has offered a module in 'Transition to Community Nursing' for community staff nurses. This acknowledges that practitioners are often working alone in environments that are not set up as health care environments, needing to be able to transfer their skills and dealing with complex collaborative relationships with both clients and families, and also with health, social and voluntary agencies. Nurses working in primary care settings also need to be able to make more autonomous decisions than their hospital based colleagues (Drennan and Davis 2008).

These workforce developments will require more GPNs to become mentors as they will need to have the skills and knowledge to be able to support their colleagues in their development. The NMC have Standards to support learning and assessment in practice that may be found here: www.nmc.org.uk/standards/additional-standards/standards-to-support-learning-and-assessment-in-practice

Taking on a recognised mentorship course will prepare you to work as a supervisor or mentor in practice, this will become an increasingly important role with the introduction of community placements in General Practice for Pre-Qualifying Student Nurses.



Reflections

- If you were to contemplate a career in the community what options are available to you?
- What is your view of NHS careers for primary care nursing?

www.nhscareers.uk This website highlights the various nursing opportunities that are available, whether it be working as a member of a primary

care team, working as part of a social enterprise or working with a specialist team of health workers. You will know what your specific interests are, so spend time working through this site.

A number of Health Care Assistants also work as part of a primary care team and they also should be involved in continuing professional development. Whilst they are not accountable to a professional body, they still have their own individual integrity and individual responsibility to ensure that they are working as a safe practitioner.

It is imperative to know what your level of knowledge is if you are to work within your competence. Look at



the diagram below. Where would you place yourself on the ladder of competence?

Level 1 – Unconscious Incompetence – You don't know that you don't know

Level 2 – Conscious Incompetence – You know that you don't know

Level 3 – Conscious Competence – You know that you know

Level 4 – Unconscious Competence – You don't know that you know – it just seems easy !

Using this ladder as a tool will assist you in identifying where more learning needs to take place, but it will also give reassurance when you are competent.



You may be aware of Benner's model that describes how during the acquisition and development of a skill, a nurse passes through five levels of proficiency: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. This model may help you and your mentor to identify those areas of skill and knowledge requiring further development.

Benner, P. (1984). From novice to expert: Excellence and power in clinical nursing practice. Menlo Park: Addison-Wesley.

The following webpage, www.mind.tools.com/pages/article/newISS-96htm introduces you to a number of leadership and management strategies which you might find useful when you identify which level on the above ladder you sit. Please remember that leadership and management not only happens in senior management positions, but every member of a team will have some leadership role to play.



Activity

Having identified where you are on the ladder, what action are you going to take to change your position on the ladder?

Also acknowledge that you may be at different levels of competence depending on what skill or subject matter is being addressed.

You may find the exercise uncomfortable because it displays areas where you possibly thought you were more competent than you actually are. This is not a problem as long as you are aware of this and demonstrate an emotional intelligence that is resilient and will assist you to develop/strengthen in these areas: www.mind.tools.com.

This website, www.emotionaliq.org/EI.htm will introduce you to emotional intelligence and the different models used. Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions in yourself, and in others. Having recognised this it then enables you to identify strategies that will help you to reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Personal Development Plan

What is required of a personal development plan? A development plan is designed to help you to reflect on your career to date and for you to put together a SMART action plan to assist you to reach your next goal. There are three key stages in working on a personal development plan:

1. Identify what is required of your current role
2. Carry out a SWOT analysis – look at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that have assisted/prevented you working effectively in your current role and also when considering future roles
3. Develop a SMART action plan to assist you to move forward in the direction of your chosen career.



Activity

Have you considered any other community career paths you may want to follow – e.g. Specialist Nurse, Community Matron? What steps/actions do you need to take to follow your chosen career

'Without carers there would be many more hospital admissions.'

pathway? www.worldwork.biz/legacy/www/downloads/Personal_Development_Plan.pdf

A personal development plan will help when you attend interviews and will also assist you when writing your CV, as it will have outlined clear objectives in your SMART action plan.

Applying for jobs

Firstly, find out background information about the organisation: whether it is a NHS Trust or a Social Enterprise, charity or private company. Information can be found on the website. Find out what their vision and strategy for the future is. What skill set are they looking for – do you have the skills they are looking for? It is essential that the job description is scrutinised and that you look at the essential skills and desirable skills that are required for the position that you are applying for. When you compile your CV ensure that it meets the criteria in the job description. Be as succinct as possible when you answer questions on the application form and do not add unnecessary information that has no bearing on the job application.

This website, www.monster.co.uk, will give you a lot of valuable information regarding the format of CV writing and the way of using specific words that will enhance your CV. If you are invited for an interview it is a good idea to have a practice interview with someone who has an understanding of the role you are applying for. Make sure you are up to date with government and Department of Health policies that potentially will impact on your practice. Be enthusiastic and remember to let the interview panel know what specific skills you will be bringing to the role. If you are asked to give a presentation it is likely that you will have ten minutes to present. Prepare your Power Point slides. Keep these to a minimum (not more than 10 slides) and only write headers or bullet points so that you can talk around the slides. Remember to speak slowly and articulate your words. It is also a good idea to bring your portfolio of personal development which will demonstrate how you have been updating yourself and what you have learnt from the updates. See <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/getajob/interviews>. Should you be unsuccessful at interview it is always a good idea to ask for feedback from the panel – this will help you when you apply for further jobs.



Reflection

Now that you have completed this on line resource, what do you plan to do? Has working through the various chapters assisted you in challenging your

practice? Do you feel more confident now? Are you going to pursue your studies further?



Chapter Summary

This chapter has looked at the importance of recognising your individual competence in the role you are currently working in. It has given some recognition to how you can recognise your level of competence. This can really only occur if the individual concerned has a self awareness that will enable them to act on their incompetence and put a strategy in place to deal with this.

The career pathway for working in General Practice was looked at, recognising that not all staff nurses will want to study for a Specialist Practitioner qualification. The importance of having a personal development plan was discussed and it was stressed that preparation in the form of CV writing, interview skills and application processes were important when applying for any new role in the community setting.

Further Web Resources

- www.adne.co.uk
- www.nhscareers.uk
- www.jobs.nhs.uk
- www.changemodel.nhs.uk
- www.kingsfund.org.uk
- www.cno.dh.gov.uk
- www.nmc.uk.org
- www.rcn.org.uk
- www.careers.guardian.co.uk
- www.businessballs.com

Evaluation

We would be grateful if you would complete a short evaluation on this resource. To take part, please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9DKX86N>. Thank you.

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