Abstracts

TAPPING INTO THE BENEFITS OF THE ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER

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10.1136/bmjspcare-2017-hospice.305

Background Nationally, the current shortage of nurses is likely to increase, in part due to the cessation of student nurse and other healthcare student bursaries (Imison & Dayan, 2016). To address this workforce gap, organisations have re-evaluated the role of health care assistants (HCAs) and their potential to develop in the work place (Skills for Health, 2015). Assistant Practitioners work at Band 4, with increased knowledge and skills developed to enable them to assess, analyse and develop patient care, the retention and development of their workforce and taking into account the impact of current financial pressures, a workforce development analysis was done to identify where changes needed to be made. It was identified that the development of the current support worker into an assistant practitioner role was critical. Funding for the project was sought from the apprenticeship scheme and agreement with the senior management team. The education department facilitated the enrolment process with University of Central Lancashire.

Results The evaluation process has not been fully developed at this stage as the training is still in progress. The following benefits have been identified:
- A clear well defined career pathway
- Specific set core competencies have been developed in line with Skills for Health; this has enhanced multi-disciplinary team working based on clarity of role responsibilities and levels of accountability
- Creating investment in staff training and development increases the recruitment and retention of staff therefore gives job satisfaction
- Individual personal development through increasing knowledge and confidence.

Conclusion The impact on the service has been evident in terms of staff absence for protected learning time as we are such a small team and backfill has proved to be difficult. A reduction in patient treatments as the support worker carries out the low-level interventions. Protected time for clinical learning has also been difficult at times and has been a strain on an already busy department.

DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF THE LYMPHOEDEMA ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER AT ST CATHERINE'S HOSPICE

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Background St Catherine's Hospice has supported the development of an assistant practitioner within its lymphoedema service as part of a workforce development strategy.

Aims To develop the role of the current support worker to address the skills shortage and recruitment difficulties within the specialty of lymphoedema

To free the specialist nurses to focus on more advanced work.

Methods To ensure the continued provision of high quality patient care, the retention and development of their workforce and taking into account the impact of current financial pressures, a workforce development analysis was done to identify where changes needed to be made. It was identified that the development of the current support worker into an assistant practitioner role was critical. Funding for the project was sought from the apprenticeship scheme and agreement with the senior management team. The education department facilitated the enrolment process with University of Central Lancashire.

Results The evaluation process has not been fully developed at this stage as the training is still in progress. The following benefits have been identified:
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