Increasing IT infrastructure and physical resources to support student placements

Date completed: 21 September 2012

Background and context

Historically, Ranges Community Health has offered on average approximately six student placements per year. These placements have been across the disciplines of occupational therapy, physiotherapy, dietetics and podiatry and have also included allied health assistants. In 2011, despite offering six placements, only four clinical placements within our organisation where accepted by students. The exact reason for this was unclear however it is suggested that our location, organisation size and low profile may have contributed to the lack of uptake of these placements. For this reason, our goals have been to increase our profile with students by marketing our organisation and the quality placements we offer, increasing the number of placements we offer and expanding the discipline areas across which we currently offer placements. To facilitate this we chose to explore opportunities to invest in small capital and equipment that will attract students and support us in providing them with high-quality learning experiences.

Project objectives and expected impacts

Project objectives

- To market placement opportunities at Ranges Community Health via our organisation website;
- To increase IT infrastructure within clinician workspaces to support students while on placement;
- To enable quality learning experiences for students by providing adequate, up-to-date clinical and educational resources.

Expected impact

- An additional placement offered per discipline per annum by 2013;
- Expansion of the existing disciplines offering community health placements to include community health nursing;
- 100% filling of placements offered by Ranges Community Health in 2013;
- A 50% increase in requests by students for placement at Ranges Community Health;
- Employment of a past student in a professional capacity at Ranges Community Health post-graduation.

Project activities

Upgrade of the Ranges Community Health student webpage

Student feedback was sorted in relation to the types of things which students would like to see on the webpage. Suggestions included information regarding the types of placement opportunities available, key contacts, photos and feedback from past students/placement experiences. A student assisted in the collation of this information for the webpage and the upgrade was completed as part of our recent rebranding from 'Ranges' to 'Inspiro'. While we are yet to incorporate all of the suggestions made by students, we have made significant improvements to the webpage and will continue to develop it based on student feedback long-term.

Installation of additional data points and purchase of a laptop to increase computer access for students across the organisation

A tablet laptop was determined to be the most suitable device to purchase to meet student needs in terms of portability so that students could use the device anywhere throughout the organisation, including across sites and on home visits. A wireless option was recommended as a cheaper and more mobile option than data points and a router has been installed in areas without data points to support this.

Purchase of two home visit bags and two tablets for use by students on home visits

Two home visit bags have been purchased and designated to students. Two tablet laptops have also been purchased based on the recommendations of our IT service. SIM cards are yet to be purchased.

Purchase of podiatry equipment and consumables

A Toe Brachial Index Kit and practice orthotic materials have been purchased and set aside for student use.

Purchase of occupational therapy assessment kits

The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure and Hierarchic Dementia Scale were both purchased and projects are planned for this use of these by students.

Purchase of human anatomy tool

The 'Visible Body' human anatomy visualisation tool has been purchased for use by students across all discipline groups.

Purchase of an iPro 2 device

This device has been purchased and is currently being used as an education tool by our diabetes nurses with clients and students to demonstrate the impact of diet, exercise and medication on blood glucose levels in diabetic clients. A quality project is planned in relation to further evaluating the use of this with both clients and students.

Project management

The project was managed by the Healthy Living Team Leader as part of the Healthy Living Team Portfolio. Governance was as per Ranges Community Health's existing management structure. Staff were consulted as part of the initial proposal, and both staff and students were consulted as part of the implementation process. The project has been completed within budget but timelines included in the original proposal required extension due to delays in confirming the receipt of funding and the time required to consult students in relation to upgrading the website. Upload of the new student webpage has also been delayed due to competing interests relating to rebranding of the organisation and the launch of a new organisation website.

Project performance against stated deliverables

Project activity	Project deliverable/target	Due date	Status
Upgrade of the Ranges Community Health student webpage to include information regarding placement opportunities, key contacts, local information, photos and feedback from past students/placement experiences and links to a Ranges Community Health student orientation manual. Involvement of students in this process and the annual updating and maintenance of the student page.	Students consulted in the design and content for Ranges Community Health student webpage.	September 2012	Completed: Will need to be ongoing and included as part of placement feedback from students long-term.
	Student webpage updated to included information on placement opportunities, local information and links to resources relevant to students completing a placement at Ranges Community Health.	December 2012	Complete
Installation of an additional data point in three clinician rooms and purchase of a laptop to be used at any of the new data points to ensure computer access for students in more locations across the organisation.	Data points installed and laptop purchased	July 2012	Complete: Wireless options set-up instead of installing new data points and tablet laptop purchased instead of standard laptop.
Purchase of two home visit bags and two tablets for use by students on home visits to enable taking of assessment photos, on the spot download of information for clients re: services, equipment, educational materials etc. and access to S2S for referrals.	Home visit bags and tablets purchased. Tablets connected for mobile internet access	April 2012 May 2012	Complete Complete: September 2012
Purchase of equipment and consumables for use with podiatry students including a Toe Brachial Index Kit and practice orthotic materials.	Equipment and consumables purchased	April 2012	Complete
Purchase of assessment kits for use by occupational therapy students including the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure and Hierarchic Dementia Scale.	Assessment kits purchased	April 2012	Complete
Purchase of 'Visible Body' a human anatomy visualisation tool for use by students across all discipline groups.	Anatomy tool purchased	April 2012	Complete
Purchase of an iPro 2 device to educate student nurses re: the impact of diet, exercise and medication on blood glucose levels in diabetic clients.	iPro 2 device purchased	May 2012	Complete: Consumables for iPro 2 also purchased.

We have upgraded our student webpage to market placement opportunities within our organisation and have included students in this process to insure the information is useful and relevant to them. We have increased our IT infrastructure to support students on placement through the purchase of three tablet laptops that can be used by students wirelessly throughout the organisation, across our two sites and while visiting clients in the community. We have also purchased a number of discipline-specific resources to enhance the learning opportunities of students undertaking diabetes education, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and podiatry placements within our organisation.

Project outcomes

In 2011, we had a total of four students despite offering six placements. This year we have already had nine students out of a total of eleven placements offered. This indicates a doubling of our capacity to offer placements over the past twelve months and this is likely to continue as opportunities arise to further implement use of the resources purchased through this project with students. Over the next twelve months we will be looking to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of these resources and the impact of marketing placements to students through our website.

Evaluation

The funding from this program has encouraged disciplines to think more broadly about their capacity to take students and the resources they can access to support them in doing this. It has also triggered the tracking of placements offered and the updating of resources for students. Delays in the provision of funds and difficulties with confirming the receipt of funds delayed the overall commencement of this project and made original timelines difficult to meet. The limited timeline for the project as a whole also made completion of project activities and evaluation of their effectiveness difficult to achieve. Rebranding of our organisation also contributed to these delays. Overall the project ran to budget. In future we will seek more clarification regarding timelines at the point of submission to ensure what we aim to achieve is realistic in relation to the timelines of the overall project.

Conclusion

Funds from this project have enabled the purchase of resources which Ranges Community Health would otherwise not have been able to invest in for students. It has stimulated the interest of staff in relation to the provision of placements and has triggered the review of existing resources in place for students. Students have enjoyed the opportunity to contribute to the upgrade of our student webpage and it is hoped this feedback from students will be ongoing as part of end of placement evaluations long-term. Along with increasing student access to IT and discipline-specific resources, the project and the resources purchased have created new opportunities for student projects and quality-related activities which students will be able to participate in and drive in future placements. It is hoped that the marketing and enhancement of resources achieved through this project with continue to contribute to the increase of placements offered and taken up by students at Ranges over the next twelve months.