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Physiotherapy management of Guillean Barre in the intensive care unit and rehabilitation setting

Background

The Charles Sturt University (CSU) and Albury Wodonga Health (AWH) simulation project was developed to address a shortage of simulation resources and skills within the region. Albury Wodonga Health is a major regional health organisation on an Albury and Wodonga Campus, providing services for a catchment of over 250 000 people and is a major provider for clinical placements for nursing, allied health and medical students. The project incorporated a number of local interested parties including Wodonga TAFE, AWH, CSU, Bogong GP Network, La Trobe University and University of New South Wales. The CSU simulation project purchased significant resources to be stored at AWH, available for use by all project partners. These resources included high-fidelity manikins, part-task trainers, audiovisual equipment and consumable items. The project also worked closely with AWH to facilitate simulation spaces at both campuses, equipped with recording equipment and the Wodonga space a viewing room and window.

Problems/drivers

The project allowed for the purchase of a large amount of simulation resources and the setup of simulation labs at both Albury and Wodonga Campuses, resulting in a significant increase in simulation for AWH staff and students on placement at AWH, however, the project identified that by limiting simulation to students only on placement at AWH, students who did not have placements planned at AWH were missing out on valuable learning opportunities as particularly CSU and Wodonga TAFE had limited simulation resources on campus.

Arriving at a solution

The project staff decided to promote the simulation program and simulation centres at AWH as ‘extra classrooms’ for the local tertiary organisations. The project worked closely with CSU physiotherapy staff to provide simulation experiences to support their campus based undergraduate education. A two-part, on-hospital site simulation was one of the simulation experiences provided to the third-year neurological rehabilitation physiotherapy students, and was very successful.

Implementation process

The physiotherapy students were put in groups of five and completed two simulation ‘stations’. The first station was based in the Albury Hospital ICU in which students were to complete at cardio-pulmonary and neurological assessment of a Guillen-Barre patient day one post-admission to ICU. The students were provided with a case background prior to entering ICU and then completed their assessment on SimMan 3G and relayed their treatment plan back to their lecturer, who was acting as a nurse in ICU.

The students then moved onto the Albury simulation lab where a hired actor was acting as the same patient, day ten in the rehab ward and the students were required to perform and neurological assessment and perform a treatment targeted towards mobilising the patient for the first time.

Outcomes

The experience was incredibly beneficial to the students in a number of ways. The students were exposed to the hospital environment in a comfortable and controlled way, in particular the ICU environment which can be overwhelming for a student. The students reported it was beneficial to practise their assessment skills in an ICU environment and being exposed to paperwork, machines and the working this environment made them feel more confident about being in the ICU setting in the future. The realism of the SimMan was also beneficial and the scenario encouraged them to put together a full assessment and treatment plan, as opposed to part task practise which happens in the university environment.

By using an actor, the students had to practise not only assessment and treatment skills but also had to display appropriate communication skills in a complex clinical environment. It was noted that the students were not confident and exhibited poor manual handling and mobilisation skills; highlighting a gap in their knowledge that would have gone unnoticed if this scenario had not been undertaken. It allowed CSU staff to address the issue by revisiting these clinical skills in follow up practical classes and ensuring students were competent. This also allowed for CSU academic staff to identify a need to review these skills at a curricular level and follow-up on curricular redesign to address this learning need.

The scenario further enhanced relationships between AWH and CSU and familiarised students with AWH and staff at AWH, potentially contributing to recruitment.

Barriers

The definite challenge for this scenario was how to put sixty students through the scenarios in a reasonable time, and ensuring that each student had a meaningful experience. This was overcome by careful planning by project staff and running small groups through the scenarios for an entire day. Another option would be to have multiple actors or use recording equipment to stream the scenarios.

Future directions

The project envisages that this model, in which the tertiary providers utilise simulation equipment and facilities in-situ at AWH, is a model that can successfully amass large numbers of student simulation hours and establish good relationships between organisations; as well as familiarising students with sometimes intimidating clinical situations. It also provides the foundation for a link between undergraduate theoretical learning and skill application in the clinical environment, improving clinical skills application and student confidence.

Further Information

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