

Interprofessional orientation for students in paediatrics within the Central Metropolitan CPN

Project summary

With hundreds of students undertaking clinical placements at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) in many disciplines, student orientation is an often repeated activity which has historically been provided in discipline-specific sessions at the beginning of the placement. The interprofessional online orientation project was undertaken at RCH in order to standardise the orientation information provided to medical, nursing and allied health students and streamline the student orientation process to improve efficiency. Collaborations between disciplines to develop a common orientation framework for students and develop and implement an online orientation project were the key aims for the project.

Drivers and challenges

Each year large numbers of students attend RCH for clinical placements across all disciplines including medicine, nursing and allied health. Each intake of students involves an orientation program which presents information necessary for students, whether they are attending for a placement for one week or thirteen weeks. It has been estimated that student orientation can be repeated up to fifty times across the hospital, covering much of the same information at each session. This information can broadly be divided into RCH-specific information, such as site orientation, way-finding and OH&S and introductory information in the area of paediatrics, such as patient and family-centred care and child rights.

The need for standardised information across all disciplines and the obvious inefficiency in the current orientation provision were the key drivers for the development of an interprofessional online orientation program. It was envisioned that aspects of this program to be developed could also be used by other paediatric placements within the CPN.

Arriving at a solution

The need for a method of providing orientation to students without the need for such a commitment of clinician time as was currently occurring was the primary driver for the project. The benefit of interdisciplinary collaboration, both for the purpose of this project and for students' clinical education in general, led to the idea to develop the program through collaboration involving staff from several disciplines.

The increase in the use of the internet and online learning by students suggested that this would be a beneficial method of providing orientation information, with the benefit of allowing them access to this information prior to the commencement of their placement and improve their readiness.

Implementation process

A steering group with members from nursing, medicine allied health, Human Resources, People and Culture, Educational Resource Centre and Corporate Communications was established and a project coordinator appointed.

Current orientation programs were compared to map commonality. Students who had attended RCH for clinical placement were surveyed to determine what was helpful about the current orientation program what would have been useful in orientation/foundation knowledge. Staff involved in student orientation and education were also surveyed to evaluate their satisfaction with current programs and possible areas for inclusion in an online program.

From this information, the steering group developed a framework for orientation and individual working parties were established to determine the content for each of these modules. The modules were produced by the Educational Resource Centre, and embedded into the RCH website.

Outcomes and impacts

The interprofessional online orientation program was rolled out at RCH in March 2012. Since that time it has been used by students from nine disciplines, with overwhelmingly positive feedback. The majority of students accessed the program from home, confirming the initial idea that they would benefit from the opportunity to access relevant information prior to the start of their placement. Comments such as “easy to access and good preparation for hospital orientation on the first day”, “easy to do in your own time and at own pace. Gave me more clinical time on first day” and “It allowed me to go at my own pace and it didn't take away from my clinical experience”, highlighted the importance students place on being able to ‘hit the ground running’. The provision of links for the necessary paperwork for day one on the home page was also popular with students and helped to avoid confusion around requirements for starting placement. Another benefit highlighted by students was the benefit of having information to reflect back on the information as they progressed through their placement.

Limitations and management strategies

In an effort to promote the sustainability of the program and to ensure the information provided to students was maintained in line with RCH policy, sections of some modules were linked to the relevant RCH policy on the website. As this policy is available on intranet only, these sections of the program were not able to be accessed externally, so there was some information available to students in summary only prior to the start of their placement. It was written into the guidelines for supervisors that they should allow students the time and computer access to review these sections as early as possible in the placement and students were given until the end of their first week of placement to complete their declaration confirming they had completed the orientation program.

There were a number of students who completed the orientation who did not complete the evaluation at the end of their placement however, a large number of students did complete the evaluation which allowed for the identification of trends within the feedback across all disciplines.

Evaluation

- 94% of students evaluated felt that the online package was an effective method of providing orientation information.
- 82% of students evaluated reported that the overall content was relevant or very relevant to their placement.
- 78% of students evaluated felt that the method of delivery overall for the modules was effective or very effective.
- 100% of staff surveyed reported an improved efficiency in delivering student orientation by using the online orientation program.

Future directions

The program as it currently stands is largely sustainable, with the links to relevant policy and the fact that the site itself requires no additional support on a regular basis are important factors. It could be further developed to include individual sections devoted to each discipline to house the discipline-specific information also provided to students, which was beyond the scope of this current project. Some orientation programs provide lectures and teaching sessions to students, and these may also lend themselves to an online program.

The current program contains general paediatric information appropriate for students attending clinical placement in a variety of paediatric settings, and the program could be broadened to provide site-specific information for other placement providers.

Further information

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