

Resourcing students and supervisors

Date completed: 28 November 2012

Background and context

Nillumbik Community Health Service (NCHS) has a number of different allied health disciplines and has provided clinical placements for a range of students including those from social work, dietetics, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Whilst staff appreciate the value of student placements and have a broad range of skills and experience to provide rich learning opportunities for students one of the main barriers to accepting student placements has been a lack of internal resources for both staff and students. This has included both IT equipment (computers/printers) and clinical tools, such as text books and specialised equipment as well as dedicated student space. Insufficient resources has meant that opportunities for students to practice assessments and techniques in non-clinical time has been limited as resources are reserved for 'real' clinical use.

The majority of staff at NCHS have been working for many years and are employed as Grade 2 clinicians. Many bring their own resources to use in their practice and capacity to purchase new text books or equipment can be limited. If staff leave, they may take resources with them, meaning that students may not have easy or ongoing access to valuable information or equipment.

In community health clients may present with many different needs which are often not covered at university in core curriculum units. Assessment and provision of care as part of interdisciplinary teams and within a client's home are two key features of a clinical placement at NCHS which may not be experienced at other organisations or fully covered during university training. Access to a variety of resources and clinical equipment will enhance the quality of the placement and ensure that students get the most of their placement with a combination of evidence based theory and practice. For many students the value of experiential learning can be consolidated by access to resources which provide the theoretical background.

Through the purchase of additional IT equipment, relevant texts and clinical equipment, it is expected that both students and supervisors will experience a more supported placement. This will in turn increase the organisation's willingness to accept student placements.

Project objectives and expected impacts

- Enhance learning outcomes/quality of student placement for students
- Enhance interdisciplinary learning
- Increase capacity to offer more than one student placement at a time.

Development of a modern student resource library

- Increased capacity for students to work effectively with community health clients leading to greater clinician confidence in accepting students (i.e. improved 'sharing' of workload).
- Increased capacity to provide resources for students to enhance learning outcomes, enabling clinicians to encourage more self-directed learning and again decrease workload associated with student placements.
- Provision of resources or access to resources to support interdisciplinary learning whilst on placement.
- Capacity for students to complete projects/assignments associated with placements whilst on site at NCHS and to produce brochures, posters and resources, which can be used by NCHS as client resources.

Project activities

Project activity was based on the purchase of resources to support student placements. The purchase of student-specific IT equipment has enabled a proposal for a student-specific room to be tabled so that students can have a specific area for working without having to constantly 'desk-jump'. Since the project commenced, adjoining rooms with a two-way mirror have become available and these rooms will be used for students undertaking placements at NCHS, allowing students to be monitored and assessed during their time with clients without having to be in the room with the students. The purchase and installation of an audio-link for these two rooms (a change from the initial list of resources for the project) will also allow students to observe students from other disciplines in practice, thus increasing their exposure to multidisciplinary work.

Other equipment is also now available for long-term use by students, i.e. is not owned by a specific clinician and at risk of being taken away from the organisation when the clinician leaves. This also gives students more resources for self-directed learning and independent practice.

Project management

The Program Managers for Allied Health and Counselling coordinated the purchase of equipment. Items over \$500 have been added to the organisational asset register.

The Allied Health Program Manager ensured that reports were completed.

Project performance against stated deliverables

Project activity	Project deliverable/target	Due date	Status
Purchase of latest editions of relevant textbooks for the following disciplines: physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work and dietetics	Resources for students and supervisors	30 March 2012	Complete
Purchase of additional laptop and printer to be dedicated to student use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to IT – online information and resources, university services and online training modules Development of client resources such as brochures and handouts 	30 June 2012	Complete Resources not developed
Purchase of equipment (e.g. paediatric tests, anatomical models, charts and learning aids, mobile weight scales for use on home visits) to enable students to trial their use without exhausting existing supplies	Purchase of supplies/equipment – clinical practice for students	30 June 2012	Complete
Development of dedicated student resource library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of student resources available across NCHS List of relevant websites for student learning/information Student project ideas folder and resources developed 	30 June 2012	Ongoing – this has been tied in with another student project which commenced at NCHS in September – ‘Interprofessional Learning Package (IPLP)’ – the development of interprofessional learning resources across the organisation. This project will also finish in early December 2012, so will tie in well with the ‘Resourcing students and supervisors’ project.

Enhance learning outcomes/quality of student placement for students

NCHS has not had relevant student placements since the purchase of additional equipment, so this objective has not yet been measured. At this stage, four student placements have been offered for the first half of 2013.

Enhance interdisciplinary learning

As stated above, there has not been the opportunity to trial interdisciplinary learning. It is anticipated that the resources purchased through this project plus the outcomes from the IPLP project will definitely enhance interdisciplinary learning.

Increase capacity to offer more than one student placement at a time

The purchase of a laptop and printer and the fit-out of the two adjoining rooms as described above, has increased the capacity of the organisation to offer more than one student placement at any time. The four student placements offered in the first half of 2013 will be overlapping.

Development of a modern student resource library

This has been achieved with the purchase of texts and learning aids such as anatomical models.

Project outcomes

All resources identified in the submission were purchased.

Evaluation

For many years there has been no money available to purchase 'non-core' supplies. This meant that clinicians often brought in their own resources or used out of date texts and photocopied supplies. To be able to purchase some new equipment and to have training resources such as the anatomical models was extremely well received by clinicians and has positive outcomes for both students and clients as items can be used to both improve client knowledge and assist in their direct treatment.

Clinicians appreciated using new equipment and being able to have greater variety in their use of resources.

The project ran to budget and there were no major issues encountered.

Conclusion

Since the purchase of the new resources, Nillumbik CHS has undergone some programmatic changes with the loss of several programs including two allied health services – paediatric dietetics and adult speech pathology. Student placements have not been offered during this period of change and it is anticipated that no extra placements will be available until 2013.

However the purchase of additional resources plus student specific IT equipment and the fit-out of two adjoining rooms to allow observation of clinical practice will facilitate the opportunity to offer student placements and increase the capacity to offer several placements to students of different disciplines at the same time with adequate resources to improve interdisciplinary outcomes.