

South East Palliative Care (SEPC) student space

Date completed: September 2012

Background and context

South East Palliative Care (SEPC) has been facilitating student placements for over a decade. We are an interdisciplinary service and have supported nursing, allied health and medical students (this year we have supported seven nursing students and two medical students from both Victoria and international universities). We are committed to expanding our clinical placements, particularly into the interdisciplinary/allied health field but recognise that the organisation has limited physical facilities to support students during their placement.

A student resource pack has been created to welcome students to our service and provide them with information and support about palliative care (including self-care techniques and activities to do during their placement). Students have given extremely positive feedback about this resource but most raised the issue of 'lack of space for them to complete the activities' and one commented "I felt like I was in the way of other staff members when they needed to use the desk space or computer and I was doing the activities."

Health statistics demonstrate that we have an ageing population, therefore we project that there will be an increased demand for palliative care. The average age of a palliative care nurse in Australia is over forty (source: Palliative Care Nurses Australia Organisation). At SEPC, 70% of our staff are over the age of forty, therefore promoting palliative care to a younger demographic of clinicians is vital for the future of palliative care. Palliative care is becoming more common in health curricula nationally. The Department of Health and Aging has been specifically targeting palliative care training to universities to promote palliative care. In 2010/11, a total of ninety-one university health courses reported that they were using specially developed palliative care materials as part of their curricula and a further thirty university courses were reviewing the material for possible future use (source: 2010-2012 DOHAW Annual Report).

By creating dedicated space for students we are increasing SEPCs capacity to host students from a variety of disciplines, improving the quality of their student placements and providing access to the latest resources. It co-locates the students within the open space amongst the whole SEPC interdisciplinary team which will facilitate interdisciplinary communication between the student and the team. A quieter work area is also available for reflective work of discussions with the educator and this also houses resources.

We will continue to evaluate our clinical placements and expect to improve their quality with out student space. This data will be shared with other palliative care community services to encourage them to similarly enhance their student placements.

Project objectives and expected impacts

Project objectives

- Create a functional space for SEPC clinical placement students amongst the team (nursing, medical and support services) for up to two students at any time
- Provide up-to-date resources for students to enhance their learning experience and opportunity to 'give back' to staff through a palliative care project
- Enhance the interdisciplinary nature of their learning by immersing them within the interdisciplinary team
- Increase student satisfaction and promote that we are a desired host organisation for clinical placements
- Make them feel more at home and part of the team.

Expected impacts

- Improve learning opportunities for students on clinical placements
- Increase clinical placement numbers at SEPC
- Increase interdisciplinary nature of clinical placements at SEPC
- Increase student satisfaction with the SEPC student program
- Increase staff satisfaction with the SEPC student program.

Project activities

The only activity which hadn't been completed as yet is surveying students and staff following the fit-out. Our last two medical students completed their tenures just as the work was completed. We did not have the opportunity to formally survey them however they verbally confirmed that the changed space was much improved and more conducive to a positive placement.

Project management

The project was managed by Acting CEO Michelle Wood and Business Manager Peter Furze following the departure of the project applicants from the organisation. The project involved sourcing appropriate contractors to complete structural work, wiring, data connections and all other infrastructure within budget and timeframe specified. Also the sourcing of relevant furniture, supplies and equipment as specified in application. The original contractor did not proceed and withdrew before work commenced. Another contractor was sourced and engaged. He subsequently completed the work.

Our process of governance has been as follows:

- Approval from the Senior Management Team and SEPC Board prior to proceeding
- Financial management and reporting – Business Manager
- Project managers – Acting CEO and Business Manager
- Ongoing governance – Education Coordinator reporting to the Acting CEO (Clinical Operations Manager)
- Regular reports on progress to Board meetings

Risk control strategies were monitored by the Acting CEO, Health and Safety Representative and Business Manager.

The bulk of structural and electrical/computer work was completed by the end of August 2012; sourcing and ordering of resources was completed in September 2012.

Project performance against stated deliverables

Project activity	Project deliverable/target	Due date	Status
Pre-survey of current staff and student on current students activities	Survey outcomes	30 January 2012	Completed
Project coordinator to organise contracts and timeline for project, approved by Senior Leadership Team	Contract and timeline approved and signed	20 January 2012	Completed
Construction of student spaces (including building work and wiring)	Physical space setup	30 April 2012	Completed
Ordering of equipment and resources	Equipment and resources ordered	20 April 2012	Completed
Installation and setup of student space	Student space ready for use	30 June 2012	Completed
Post-survey of staff and student satisfaction	Survey outcomes and comparison with pre-survey outcomes	August 2012	Not complete, no students since completion

The project has met its objectives by providing visiting students with physical space in the office which enables them to co-locate and learn within an interdisciplinary team framework. They have ready access to all members of the team plus the educator and also have a quieter area equipped with learning resources where they can spend reflective time or meet privately with the educator as required. They also have dedicated access to computers.

The project enabled SEPC to enhance the open office space and also create a smaller quieter area.

Project outcomes

- Enhanced opportunities for the students to work within and learn from an interdisciplinary team
- Opportunities for students to observe and participate in interdisciplinary interactions and discussions
- More comfortable and appropriate learning environment
- Provision of current learning resources
- Space to meet with the educator to facilitate guidance and enhance learning
- Improved feeling of satisfaction and inclusion and being 'part of the team'
- Ability for SEPC to increase student numbers
- Provision of dedicated computers for student use.

Conclusion

The Small Capital and Equipment Program enabled us to enhance our student placement program which will ultimately lead to better and more productive placement experiences for students of all disciplines and staff. It will also enable more students on placement, giving them experience as part of an interdisciplinary team.