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Simulation in a patient safety framework

Background

Simulation learning methods have been shown to be an effective teaching and learning approach to educate all levels of health professionals to provide safe and competent patient centred care. Since 2005, the Department of Health has supported the development of simulation-based education and training through various programs to support and develop the existing strong culture of collaboration and innovation in health professional education and training in Victoria. To further increase the numbers of health professional students who have access to clinical education and training, Health Workforce Australia have commissioned a project to encourage further uptake of simulation-based learning methods across Australia. In Victoria, the Department of Health has identified the project will “enhance the range of experiences that learners are exposed to and expand the opportunities for appropriate multi-disciplinary training, while minimising risks to patients/clients, learners and to the health care system overall. Simulation will contribute to and enable competency-based training and assessment, and will both foster and reflect innovation in clinical education and training” (Department of Health Report 2011 p4).

Within the Southern Metropolitan Clinical Placement Network (SMCPN) and the Mornington Peninsula Clinical Placement Network (MPCPN) there are a large number of health care facilities. These range from primary care facilities which include general practice and community health centres, to large tertiary public and private hospitals with specialties ranging from trauma, infectious disease, burns, mental health, maternity services and paediatrics. The SMCPN and MPCPN also provide and support a range of education providers to meet the learning needs of students enrolled in higher education, vocational education and training programs, as well as the continuing education needs of current health professional staff.

This is a collaborative project that was developed by a SMCPN stakeholder-led advisory group. Invitations were sent to all SMCPN stakeholders inviting them to participate in this advisory group. Several meetings were conducted including a four-hour workshop facilitated by the Director of Organisational Development, The Alfred. Stakeholders involved in developing this project included representatives from health industry and education sectors. Health sector representation included nursing, medicine, allied health, paramedicine and included public, private, and not-for-profit organisations. Education sector participants encompassed the full range of clinical training for entry-level health practitioners, postgraduate learners and trainees, vocational education and training learners and ongoing skills development training.

Problem/drivers

Accessing quality simulation education on a regular basis for all health professional entry to practice professionals has long been a barrier to the expansion of simulation education provision. This access has been limited by funding of education, lack of simulation assets, lack of simulation facilities and educators. To this point, simulation education has been primarily focussed on Crisis Resource Management, but with the new National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards for hospital accreditation a move towards patient safety focussed education has become a new priority.

Arriving at a solution

To address the education needs with a focus on patient safety and allow for equitable access to quality simulation resources within the two clinical placement networks, a two pronged approach was used.

Using strengths and existing resources within both the Southern and Peninsula CPNs, the aim was to develop and pilot a collaborative, distributed model of simulated learning focused on patient safety to enhance preparation of learners to be fit-for-practice.

The model will be sustainable, interprofessional and maximise access to simulated learning with vertical integration into health professional curricula.

The first aspect of the project was the purchase and creation of an asset library of simulation equipment. This asset hub was primarily located at Holmesglen Institute, has an online booking system to allow for ease of access across the networks and also employed high level technical support and an equipment technician to ensure that these assets were appropriately cared for and to allow for ease of distribution.

The second aspect was the creation of an online education platform with simulation content focussed on patient safety and delivered in a framework that mirrors the operational requirements of the new National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. The online program was divided into five modules that address key outcomes for patient safety. Each module contains interactive activities as well as high-quality simulation content presented in a range of formats to ensure student engagement with the material. The modules are as follows:

* Introduction to patient safety,
* Collaborative healthcare,
* Procedural safety,
* Medication safety,

Management of the deteriorating patient.

The scenarios and simulation material developed for the online learning program can also be readily adapted to utilise the asset equipment for in-situ simulation in a variety of education and health care settings.

Implementation process

The governance of this project involved the formation of two working parties to address the two aspects of the project under the direction of a steering committee and the lead agency, the Australian Centre for Health Innovation.

The asset hub working party purchased the assets following an extensive consultation process with the various network stakeholders undertaken during the proposal period and established the main asset hub at Holmesglen. The working party also established the borrowing policies and procedures and informed the process of designing and creating an online booking process. The asset hub was launched in December 2012 and has shown continual growth in activity and usage.

The online education program was overseen by another working party and was a collaborative approach from many healthcare education professionals including nursing and medicine from both simulation and academia. The framework design was created to provide a scaffolded approach to the material allowing for expansion and consolidation of the material for the student. The material was created by clinicians currently working in the acute care setting and reflects the most current practices and issues in health care.

All modules were overseen and reviewed by external parties and a peer review of the program was commissioned and completed by Professor Cobie Rudd of Edith Cowen University and the National Simulation Fellow.

Outcomes

The outcome of the project is that a comprehensive online learning program in patient safety was developed and incorporates the use of high quality simulation resources as well as links to the simulation asset hub. The asset hub provides a repository of a wide variety of accessible and usable simulation equipment and related scenarios.

Barriers

There were a number of barriers that were encountered in the implementation of the project. There were a number of delays in receiving asset hub equipment, which was out of the control of the project team. The decision was made to launch the hub with equipment as it was received and to subsequently add to the process as more equipment was delivered. There was also the problem with accessing the purchased training to appropriately utilise the equipment and this was solved by the in-kind support of experienced simulation educators within the networks who provided informal training on equipment as required to ensure that all equipment could be borrowed as needed.

There was significant in-kind support required to complete the design and initial creation of the online framework that was not sustainable, so the budget was adjusted to allow for the engagement of a content designer and other review work to be completed ensuring a high standard on delivery.

There were a number of technical difficulties with the development and design of the online platform that required extra resources that were not originally included within the budget. Other items were adjusted to reflect the change in budget to accommodate this.

Future directions

This project has been implemented across the two CPN’s and both the online learning program and the assets continue to be utilised by both education providers and health care services. Further funding was received to support the asset hub and the online framework and to expand the service to create nodes facilitating greater access across the networks.

Further information

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