Primary Care News

Introduction to Practice Nursing Course

All nurses practicing in the community should be provided and encouraged to have an appropriate training and orientation to ensure a skilled and competent workforce. A professional nurse needs to ensure that he/she is a competent practitioner, developing expertise to meet patient needs in a holistic manner while working in Primary Care. This is necessary within the primary care structures as new demands and role development continue.

The aim of the course is to assist nurses in the transition from secondary to primary care with objectives including:

- To assist nurses to adapt to nursing in Primary care.
- To give nurses an educational and professional basis to assist them to work in the area of General Practice.
- To identify the support available to the Practice Nurse in the general practice setting.
- Understand and engage with the Primary Care Teams and their development.
- Encourage nurses to identify areas where they may require continual professional development and education with examples such as cervical check, chronic illness management and immunisation.
- Encourage the nurse to develop a career path.

This has become necessary in line with the development of the Scope of Practice Framework (An Bord Altranais, 2000) and nurses maintaining personal/professional portfolios.

Primary Care and Palliative Care

The Irish Hospice Foundation, with support from the ICGP and HSE, established the Primary Care Palliative Care programme in late 2009. The initial phase is seeking to identify a range of initiatives that would support primary care staff as they care for people who are expected to die within 12 months. This group is chaired by Dr Paul Gregan who works part time as a Consultant in Palliative Medicine in Blackrock Hospice and a General Practitioner.

Throughout 2010, opinions on this topic were gathered from a wide range of stakeholders, via questionnaires, consultation meetings, dissemination at conferences, articles and individual professional meetings. The consultation meetings took place in Tullamore, Cork, Dun Laoghaire, Rialto and Letterkenny.

A number of initiatives will be piloted in phase two of this programme, and these will seek to complement the work of the HSE Clinical Programmes in Primary Care and Palliative Care. Phase two will commence mid 2011, following the publication of the interim report.

The questionnaire was circulated (via HSE) to a total of 680 GPs, community nurses, and other health care professionals working in five HSE LHO regions. It had a 27% response rate.

Initial findings indicated that staff working in primary care would benefit from enhanced communication systems between primary, secondary and tertiary care, with greater access to expertise and care after hours. Further education on symptom control, and care of the imminently dying patient at home was also highlighted.

A four-page questionnaire was subsequently devised, based on the themes emerging from consultation meetings as well as review of literature. It focused on prioritising potential initiatives as well as identifying emerging practices in the area of delivering palliative care within primary care settings.

For more information contact Marie Lynch at marie.lynch@hospice-foundation.ie or look at development page of the Hospice Foundation – www.hospice-foundation.ie

Dr Paul Gregan

Further information or queries, please contact primarycare@hse.ie

Addiction and Mental Health

Advances in Dual Diagnosis in Primary Care – Cork City

Traditionally, mental health services were based in inpatient units and addiction services delivered from specialised treatment centres and out-reach services. Whilst this continues in most areas, the rolling out of the primary care teams is providing an environment for the growth of dual diagnosis services in the wider community.

In the Togher/Ballyphehane area of Cork City, this comprises mental health and substance abuse professionals who work together to address both the addiction and the mental health concerns. Communication between the different professionals has been enhanced allowing for the development of an integrated plan of care, which in turn responds efficiently and comprehensively to the clients needs.

Historically, referrals between the addiction and the mental health services were often delayed. Lengthy waiting lists became a barrier to maintaining the initial motivation with which clients presented when first accessing mental health services.

In 2009, a community based mental health and primary care addiction counsellor commenced joint visits to the acute local in-patient mental health facility and conducted joint assessments in the community, in the immediate phase of the referral. The referrals were then discussed at multi disciplinary team level, allowing for an integrated dual diagnosis care plan to be implemented.

The clinicians met weekly with the objective of pooling their professional knowledge. As this initiative progressed it began to save time and professional resources. The two clinicians also attended a dual diagnosis training programme.

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If you are new, or well established, please access the following link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/advocacyunit and complete online. Alternatively you can contact Rachel.mcevoy@hse.ie (086) 854 3695 and answer a few short questions.

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The HSE National Advocacy Unit is currently updating its registered list of Service User Panels/Committees/Forums. Those registered will be provided with news alerts, reference materials, and in due course will be invited to join an online discussion forum through HSEland.ie to help improve the development, functioning, networking and overall work of Service User Panels/Committees/Forums.

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National Audiology Review Report Launched

On Wednesday 13th April the HSE published the report of its National Audiology Review Group. The Review was chaired by Professor John Bamford, Honorary Professor of Audiology, University of Manchester and Mr Brian Murphy, HSE National Primary Care Services Manager. The work undertaken by the Review Group constitutes the most extensive examination to date of audiology services in Ireland.

The Review Group examined audiology services currently provided to children and Adults nationwide and assessed the needs of the population. It found that better use of existing resources, coupled with some additional funding, and improved integration of services across the hospital and community settings will represent a long term investment in providing the best possible care, with improved health and social outcomes for clients. Arising from the recommendations of the Review Group, work is now underway to improve access and deliver high quality, consistent audiology services around the country. In addition to the estimated €11 million funding available for audiometry services annually (excluding funding for voluntary organisations), in 2011 the HSE is investing an additional €3.7 million to begin the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Group. The recruitment of a National Project Manager, a National Clinical Lead and 4 Regional Clinical Lead is currently underway.

New Hearing Screening Programme for Newborns

All new born babies at Cork University Maternity Hospital (CUMH) are now being offered a free hearing screening test prior to being discharged from the hospital. CUMH became the first hospital in the country to implement a new national Newborn Hearing Screening Programme in April. The development actions one of a series of recommendations made by a National Audiology Review Group. The detection of early hearing is very important to a child’s development and it also means that support and information can be provided to parents at an early age. Mr Peter O’Sullivan, Consultant Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon and Chairperson of the Cork Newborn Hearing Screening Implementation Group, said the earlier that a hearing loss can be picked up in a baby the better the outcome that baby will have. Any baby who does not have a clear response in one or both ears from the test will be seen for a full audiological (hearing) assessment at a Audiology Clinic in Cork University Hospital (CUH) shortly after discharge.

It is planned to roll out the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme to all HSE South Maternity hospitals by the end of 2011 with further national roll out planned thereafter.

Community Participation – North Sligo Primary Care Team

The North Sligo Primary Care Team held its first public meeting with a view to setting up a Community Health Forum. This PCT has previously held two very successful public information evenings, one specifically themed around Ageing with Health which covered topics around safety in the home, healthy eating and physical activity. The 2nd information evening covered family health issues and had topics including, cyber-bullying, speech & language in early development, MABS services and information on a community garden project.

The PCT was aware that there was no representatives from the Community on the team and felt that Community participation was essential to enable service users to participate in decisions about their health and to ensure that services are responsive to identified needs. The PCT decided to hold a public meeting with a view to establishing a Community Health Forum. Lots of information notices and invitations were distributed to local groups and this proved very worthwhile as over 40 local people turned up on the night. Presentations were given by one of the GP’s on the PCT about how the PCT has developed and what it involves. There was also a speaker from Comhairle na nÓg who highlighted the importance of listening to the views of young people on health related matters. There was a very positive response from the participants around issues relating to their community and it proved very worthwhile in eliciting information from the participants. The participants were very positive about developing a forum as a result of the meeting and over 20 people signed up to attend a further meeting to establish the forum.

Ballyfermot New Facility

Front Row (L-R): Jim Curran, Assistant National Director Estates, Minister Mary Harney, Adrian Charles - Local Health Manager.

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Ballyfermot New Facility

Right: Photo take at the turning of the first sod event on the new Ballyfermot Primary Care and Mental Health Centre. Front Row (L-R): Jim Curran, Assistant National Director Estates, Minister Mary Harney, Adrian Charles - Local Health Manager.

WHO Hand Hygiene Day

May 5th is designated by the WHO as Hand Hygiene Day. Hand hygiene is the single most effective measure that healthcare workers (HCWs) can undertake to prevent healthcare-associated infection (HCAI) and colonisation from multi-drug resistant organisms. HCWs compliance with hand hygiene has been reported with very variable results; the WHO calculating an average compliance rate of 37% from a large range of studies.

The WHO First Global Patient Safety Challenge ‘Clean Care is Safer Care’ was launched in 2005, with the primary objective of raising awareness of and to mobilise countries worldwide to address HCAI as a patient safety issue. In 2009, a global campaign ‘Save Lives; Clean Your Hands’ was launched by the WHO as a major component of the ‘Clean care is Safer Care’ challenge.

The ‘Save Lives; Clean Your Hands’ campaign provides healthcare facilities (HCF) with a wide range of resources to improve hand hygiene compliance. These tools and resources can be accessed at http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/en/index.html.

If your facility has not yet signed up for the Save lives; Clean Your Hands campaign sign up this year at http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/register/en/index.html.

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