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Co-creative Partnership for Practice

This paper describes how the use of Dedicated Education Units (DEUs) as a model of clinical teaching and learning enhances the student experience and the engagement of clinical practitioners. A significant additional finding within the research was the impact of the DEU on improving patient outcomes. This novel finding has not been reported in research on DEU's to date.

The literature on clinical learning environments suggests that a DEU facilitates student learning by situating them within the culture and social context of practice. Students experience being part of an authentic clinical team enabling them to experience first-hand the cooperative nature of nursing practice.

The Clinical Learning, Environment, Supervision, and Nurse Teacher (CLEST+T) instrument was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the clinical learning environment. This tool investigates the supervisor relationship, pedagogical atmosphere, role of nurse teacher, leadership of manager and premises of nursing. Recent studies in New Zealand maintain that the CLES+T scale provides a reliable and valid tool to evaluate the quality of clinical learning environments, including those created by a DEU (Watson et al., 2012).

The translation of data from this tool provides a comprehensive view of the experience and growth of students within the DEU. Results indicate that the DEU facilitated not only the expected benefits of improving student learning but also the unexpected and significant outcomes of improved patient experience and the development of strong communities of practice within the clinical environment.

The development of DEU's, using an academic and clinical partnership as the basis, have met the initial aim of achieving an improved learning culture. There has also been an increased interest from a range of other clinical settings wishing to employ a DEU model for student placements. The motivation to become a DEU is predicated on the perception that as well as facilitating good outcomes for students and patients it is also beneficial for nurses and the clinical team. This offers an exciting shift from service delivery as a focus of care to a culture of integrated co-operative learning.

Reference:

Watson, S., Flotman, B., Fourie, W., McClelland, D. Cooper, L., Williams, P. McDonald, S., and Whittle, R., 2012, *A practical guide to developing a dedicated education unit*, Ako Aotearoa – The National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, Wellington, New Zealand.

Presenters:

Cheryl Atherfold: Clinical Director PDU, Waikato DHB

Glennis Birks: Team Manager undergraduate nursing WINTEC

Angela Stewart: Principal Academic Staff Member WINTEC

