Applying change management and leadership theory to practice - final year nursing students’ contribution to improving quality in practice.

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Background

- The launch of the Scottish Patient Safety Programme (SPSP) in 2009 provided the impetus to look at how undergraduate nurses could engage with this in the clinical environment.
- At the same time allowing the students to apply theoretical knowledge of leadership and change management to clinical care.
Aims

- To actively engage students in quality assurance and patient safety initiatives
- To facilitate students to identify areas for practice improvement
- To carry out a quality improvement project in relation to patient safety
- To allow students to apply change management theory to practice and to identify barriers to change
- To facilitate integration with the ward teams and develop confidence prior to registration with the NMC

The Process

- The consolidation period (12 weeks) was identified as the most appropriate time
- This is the period the students will gain experience in leadership /management within the clinical setting to prepare them for NMC registration.
- Ward managers were approached and permission given prior to the students arriving at the clinical area.
Basis that the project was set upon

- Lewin’s Change Management Theory

Prior to commencing placement

- Students were given an introduction to both Lewin’s Change Theory model and theories of leadership.
- Informed to commence project within week 3 of the placement as this would give them the chance to settle in to the clinical area.
- Students asked to work closely with Senior Charge Nurse and Mentor on their clinical area.
The process

• Students developed their proposal closely supported by clinical and academic staff.

• Students kept in close contact with the academic staff throughout the development of their project. Students also worked closely with the clinical risk management team at NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde.

• Piloting of the project was undertaken first in the clinical area and feedback to the students was given by both nursing and medical staff.

Implementation and evaluation of projects

• Once pilot phase was completed, students then implemented their project in the clinical area.

• On completion of the project the student undertook an evaluation, seeking feedback from key stakeholders which included clinical staff, mentors and charge nurses.

• Projects were presented to academic staff, peer groups and individuals from the clinical areas.
Examples of projects

- Development of a communication tool between wards and hospital kitchens, as student noted that there was a great deal of wastage in the hospital meals in this particular clinical area.
- Development of a poster alerting junior medical staff to the risks of prescribing 1gramme of paracetamol to patients with body weights of < 45 kg.
- Introduction of a protocol for documenting oral hygiene.

Feedback from students

“it really helped me to integrate with the ward team and helped me make the link with theory and practice.”

“The project made me realise my own potential, it gave me confidence in working with not only nurses but medical staff.”

“I can’t believe what I have achieved, it has given me confidence.”
Feedback from managers

“fantastic idea will ensure best practice maintained and patient safety enhanced.”

“Very impressed with the student’s work.”

Conclusion

• Of the 8 projects undertaken 7 have been adopted into clinical practice.
• Undergraduate nurses can make a meaningful contribution to quality assurance and patient safety
• In order for this to take place there needs to be collaboration between the clinical areas and the academic institution in engaging with the project and supporting the student.