Innovation in Supporting Student Learning

Enhancing nursing clinical skills education through blended learning

**Aims of the initiative**

The main aims of the programme were:
- to enhance the teaching and learning of clinical skills across all programmes;
- to provide clinical skills DVDs customised to the Irish practice context.

**Why was the initiative developed?**

Clinical skills are a vitally important component of both undergraduate and graduate nursing and midwifery programmes. In order to develop competence in clinical practice, as part of their nursing/midwifery degree courses, undergraduate nursing and midwifery students are required to attend clinical skills workshops in university to provide them with an exposure to the skills they will require on clinical placement and also to develop their confidence in practicing skills. In addition, graduate students are taught specialised clinical skills in university to prepare them to become Advanced Practitioners in Nursing.

Within the past two years a suite of DVD’s was developed and filmed to support clinical skills education within the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems. My role as clinical skills manager is both supportive and operational and has been central to the innovation and excellence in this area. By providing expert assistance with highly specialised equipment such as Simman and Nursing Anne for filming, developing the concept of a voiceover approach to filming, reviewing and editing scripts and video footage and arranging for the production of each of the DVDs from beginning to end a successful and innovative process has occurred.

**How was the initiative developed?**

A suite of DVD’s was produced within the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems to provide an efficient and standardised approach to the teaching of clinical skills. Methodologies that have been shown to positively influence the transfer of training include behavioural modelling, situated cognition and cognitive apprenticeship (Burke et al 2006, Woolley and Jarvis 2007).

DVDs provide the first step in this process; the modelling phase allows students to grasp the essential content and requirements needed to acquire a skill. Combining DVDs with explanation and reasoning, as provided by facilitators, develops students’ problem solving abilities, increases their understanding of the thinking behind the doing and stretches students’ learning into a higher developmental level (Greene, 2009). Additionally, although clinical skills DVDs are available on the market they are unsuitable as they adhere to codes of practice that fail to address the legislated practice within an Irish nursing and midwifery context, thus falling short of our students’ needs.

**What are the benefits?**

The introduction of the suite of newly created DVD’s has led to a structured, consistent approach to teaching by all staff participating in the relevant modules. Students benefit from learning from a combination of teaching techniques in the clinical laboratories: DVDs supplement the facilitator’s educationalist view ensuring that deep learning occurs. Thus a blended learning approach that taps into a broad range of student learning styles is being presented. Additionally each DVD is uploaded onto Blackboard and can be accessed by students at any time of day or night both within and outside of the university. Alternatively, edited versions of the DVDs can be embedded into software packages such as Articulate to create reusable learning objects (RLOs) thus providing tutorials in clinical skills which can also be accessed remotely by students. The DVDs are particularly useful for allowing students on clinical placement the choice of reviewing particular skills, thus building confidence and improving practice, leading to better care for patients and the general public.

Students have evaluated the introduction of the DVD’s as a positive experience which they say has enhanced their learning of clinical skills. As clinical skills manager, I have also had the opportunity to gain skills in producing, scripting and editing recordings which will enhance the teaching and learning of clinical skills for future cohorts of nursing and midwifery students.