

MASTERS LEVEL EDUCATION IN RENAL CARE – NEW WAYS TO ENHANCE THE SCOPE OF INTERPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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PROBLEM The demand for renal care is on the increase (Kidney Alliance, 2001) and there is a determination to reduce variations in health-care, increase numbers of patients treated and improve health outcomes. As a consequence the Renal National Service Framework (NSF) is expected to be published in modular form in 2004. However the complexity of renal care also requires integrated multi-professional working and highly competent and educated staff.

PURPOSE To help address these issues, there needed to be an evaluation of the traditional ways in which experienced members of the renal team pursued continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. A partnership between a regional renal unit and a Higher Education Institution (HEI) developed, and ideas for specialist education evolved. The HEI already offered a number of postgraduate modules for renal nurses and technicians, although there was no multi-professional education in renal care offered at Masters-level

DESIGN The HEI requested evidence that there was indeed a potential market for specialised modules of this nature, so market research was carried out prior to the first stage of module validation. Because of the recent National Renal Workforce Planning Group recommendations (2002) and the imminent publication of the NSF, interest appeared high. Subsequently, a curriculum planning group made up from all members of the multi-professional team and a patient representative, developed an outline for two Masters-level renal modules based on the forthcoming NSF. The two modules are: (1) Dialysis and Transplantation (2) Prevention and continuing care of renal failure.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION The modules are due to commence in April / September 2004. The modules can either be taken as part of an MSc Nursing / MSc Interprofessional practice, or as stand-alone modules. The modules will be run in partnership between a University (HEI) and a regional renal unit and students from all disciplines are welcomed. Each module will utilise an 'enquiry-based learning' model. That is, students from all disciplines will work together in class to assess, plan and evaluate common challenges in contemporary renal practice. Entry criteria will be recent study at degree level or equivalent and more than four years experience of working in the renal speciality. Each module will give 15 credits at level M (Masters level).

RELEVANCE It is thought that these modules will be the first Masters-level modules in the UK to attract all disciplines working in renal care.