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Abstract

This article outlines how student nurses evaluated the introduction of a poster presentation within a module. It highlights how such a strategy can: make learning more enjoyable; disseminate information to peers and practice staff; and be used as a teaching aid for patients.

The Context
Pre-registration diploma and undergraduate BSc student nurses undertake a mandatory ‘nursing approaches to enablement’ module in their second year of education.

Enablement is a relatively new concept, often used interchangeably with rehabilitation. The module’s theoretical component requires a 3,000-word essay on: ‘In relation to the poster presentation, discuss an aspect of actual patient care that could be enhanced by the application of an element of an enabling framework.’

Clinical practice staff said they felt they did not fully understand the module’s requirements and students’ anxieties about them. The introduction of the poster presentation aimed to enhance insight into the module’s theoretical element.

In consultation with practice staff, it was decided that students would produce an informative piece of visual material in the form of a poster. The poster project, entitled ‘Patient-centred enablement in clinical practice’, encourages students to think about concepts of enablement from the start of their clinical placement. The poster presentation should be part of the preliminary interview with mentors, covering aspects of care that could be addressed.

Students are given an overview of poster presentations in a two-hour launch session, which explains the guidelines and includes a question and answer session. They are given a handout and a reference list with suggested articles (Hardicre et al, 2007). This has quelled anxiety, as this type of presentation is unlike any other that students have previously undertaken.

Presenting Posters
The poster presentations take place around six weeks into a 15-week module. Students are divided into groups of 40, and posters are displayed simultaneously for each group. Students are encouraged to view each other’s posters, ask questions and discuss issues raised, much as nurses do at conferences.

Evaluation
The evaluation explored students’ views on several aspects: whether they shared the information with the clinical practice area; whether they viewed it as an effective learning strategy; and the strengths and weaknesses of undertaking such presentations.

The poster exercise was evaluated using a questionnaire with quantitative and qualitative questions. It was distributed during a timetabled session to give a better response than postal questionnaires.

The questionnaire included two closed questions with space for comments, one based on a 10-point scale and two qualitative questions.

Results
The response rate was 100% (n=94). Overall, students responded positively about both their experiences and the effectiveness of posters as a learning strategy.

The following themes were highlighted: links with the clinical placement; preparation for the assignment; learning strategy; and strengths and weaknesses.

Implications for Practice
● This evaluation provides an overview of how a poster presentation was implemented for one cohort of students, so the results are not generally applicable.
● Poster presentations are not a new concept. Their use here, to raise clinical practice awareness of theoretical assessments, is a further step in bridging theory and practice.
● Working in partnership is essential when designing curriculums. Clinical practice staff should be kept informed about developments in academic assessment, and educators should be visible to these staff.
● Poster presentations have been effective in disseminating information and in improving relationships between education and clinical practice staff, and are an effective learning strategy.
BACKGROUND

- The use of poster presentations as a learning method is well recognised within healthcare education, especially in nursing (Akister et al, 2000).
- This may be attributed to the benefits of information-gathering, which includes analysis and dissemination. Halligan (2008) considered these are vital for personal and professional growth.
- The poster presenter can facilitate a dialogue with colleagues through networking (Weaver Moore et al, 2001) and discussions on a range of subjects rather than just their chosen one.

The questionnaire found that 73% of students had displayed their poster at their clinical placement. Moule et al (1998) said that this transfers theory to practice. Halligan (2008) considered that this provides opportunities to disseminate knowledge to practitioners and is a useful method of communicating accomplishments.

Students said that this had been achieved in various ways. Responses included: ‘Displayed poster in the staff room’; ‘Discussed and showed it to my mentor’; and ‘Was able to share with other students’. Some said they had given a short talk on the poster to other students and ward staff.

A number highlighted how the poster presentation had been used as a teaching aid for patients. For example, one student had prepared a poster on dietary issues for renal patients and referred to this when educating a patient new to dialysis.

The remaining students (27%) had not shared their work with practice and cited the following reasons: ‘Mentor was not interested’; ‘Mentor thought it was a waste of time considering they were very busy’; and ‘Not confident in my work’.

Akister et al (2000) reported some students felt they lacked confidence in undertaking this form of assessment. In this group, some gave similar reasons for not sharing their work: ‘Not good enough’; ‘Not confident’; ‘Poster not very good, can’t draw’.

Other comments suggested there was a lack of interest from the practice area, such as ‘Mentor not interested’ and ‘No opportunity’. These responses are worrying, especially as the indicative guidance for clinical proficiencies for the module includes initiating ‘the sharing of information in relation to the module poster presentation’. However, this was the first run of the module and, with lecturers visiting every student on placement, it is anticipated that such apathy should reduce in future.

Students were asked whether undertaking the poster work had helped in preparing the assignment, and 92.5% said it had. The most common themes were: ‘It gave me a better understanding of enablement’; ‘Able to identify topic and prepare for assignment’; ‘Started work on my assignment earlier’.

The remaining 7.5% gave the following responses: ‘Lot of extra work involved’; ‘Too early in the placement’; ‘Not enough time to undertake work due to change in timetable’.

Students also said that written feedback was useful as this set out areas they could address further in the summative assignment. In presenting their poster to clinical practice staff, they also identified that useful ideas were generated that they could link to the assignment.

Qualitative questions were used to ascertain students’ opinions on positive and negative aspects. There were two clear positive aspects. First, it helped students to prepare for their written assessment.

Comments included: ‘It gave me an insight into what to look for’; ‘A basis to start my assignment’; and ‘Able to get a structure for the assignment by doing the poster work’.

Second, students said it had given them confidence in presenting and it had been enjoyable. Some comments included: ‘Gained confidence in presenting skills’; ‘Improved my self-confidence as I only had to talk to the lecturer and not the whole group’; and ‘It was fun, relevant to the assignment and got good feedback’.

Other positive areas related to understanding enablement, a different type of formative assessment and integrating theory to practice.

Negative aspects included inadequate time and extra work. Comments included issues around preparation and presentation: ‘I can’t draw’; ‘I found it daunting’; ‘Not done anything like this before and I panicked’. These responses are similar to those discussed by Akister et al (2000).

The final question asked about the effectiveness of posters as a learning strategy using a scale of 1–10, with 1 being the least effective and 10 being very effective.

The largest percentage (29.7%) of students rated the effectiveness as 8, with the majority rating it as 5 and above.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation produced the following recommendations:

- To evaluate mentors and clinical practice staff regarding their knowledge and understanding of requirements for poster presentations and to evaluate the effectiveness of poster presentations;
- To include it as part of the module evaluation and build in time for this.

REFERENCES


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