

Implementation of an educational research strategy: NHS Education for Scotland

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What is NHS for Scotland (NES)?

- NES (April 2002) – umbrella educational organisation involved in training and lifelong learning for the NHS workforce in Scotland.
- A key feature is partnership-working
 - Scottish Government (devolved responsibility for health and education)
 - Territorial Health Boards (front line health care)
 - Universities responsible for the education of health care professions
- Different health care disciplines in NES have widely varying experience of research

Role of Central Research Function

- Period(s) of transition
- To foster a culture of interdisciplinary critical thinking and collaboration
- To recognise and capitalise on NES' unique position in Scotland as potential broker between government and the health service
- Prime organisation to effect knowledge exchange and translation activity
- Tight financial climate – internal re-distribution of resources (staff and money)

NES Investment in Educational Research

- NES Educational R&D Strategy (2005 - 2009)
Research priorities derived from a 'Listening Exercise' based on Canadian and English models
- Focus on multidisciplinary educational research in three programme areas:
 - Patient safety
 - Team-based education and collective learning
 - Assessment and clinical skills
- Over 2005/6 and 2006/7 NES invested a total of £500,000 (881,000 CAD) to fund multidisciplinary research

Team-work

- NES Educational Research Lead appointed in 2005
- Research Support Officer (part-time) from 2005
- Educational Research Governance Committee (policy, approval) and an Executive Group (action group)
- Educational Research Programmes Leads for each of three national programme areas
- Series of NES national workshops to identify researchers or staff with the appetite to undertake research

Operational Framework

- Previously ER led solely by individual (professional) NES directorates
- Application processes:
 - information and guidance pack (+ ethical approval)
 - multidisciplinary focus within one of ER programme areas
 - outline then full submission – one year study
 - maximum £25,000 (= 44,000 CAD)
 - decision by peer review
- Monitoring processes:
 - support (and mentoring) by research programme leads
 - interim and final research reports
 - performance indicators to manage risks
- Quality assurance:
 - internal and external peer review

Results

- 24 multidisciplinary projects funded:
 - **Patient safety** (e.g. investigation into causes of error in prescribing and dispensing medication; applying quality improvement methods in practice settings)
 - **Team-based education and collective learning** (e.g. evaluating the effectiveness of practice-based small group learning; peer assisted learning in allied health professions)
 - **Assessment and clinical skills** (e.g. development of assessment tools in healthcare settings; evaluation of educational interventions)
- Common, transferable themes:
 - Importance of learning environment to drive and effect quality improvements in health care
 - Need for evidence base for current and future educational assessment tools
 - How to facilitate take-up of evidence using educational interventions

Immediate Impacts

- **Dissemination:**
 - Publications in peer reviewed academic journals
 - Conference presentations
- **Infrastructure and research capacity:**
 - Some researchers had little research experience prior to grant funding
 - Others have benefitted from research management and budgetary responsibility
- **Practice:**
 - Educational programmes have been set up for different health professions
 - Action research to improve knowledge, skills and confidence in use of evidence-based practice
- **Policy:**
 - Contributed to guidance on learning from national patient safety incidents
 - Systematic review of effectiveness of e-portfolios for postgraduate assessment and education

Potential for Learning

- Emerging relationship between patient safety and collective learning
- Implications of the research for further policy and future practice
- Health Board (front-line NHS) interest and engagement in research and their practical application
- Value and challenge of methodological issues and capturing future impact of investment

Current status / Future Potential

- What has worked well?
 - three educational research programmes (within budget and impact still continuing)
 - identification of and collaboration with NES research community
 - central operational and governance systems in place
- What has worked less well?
 - 'buy-in' from different professional directorates
- What next?
 - building on current engagement with health boards
 - strategic engagement with policy makers