Physiotherapy Practice Education

in Primary Care:

The Practice Educator Perspective

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Introduction

Although physiotherapy practice educators have reported multiple benefits as a result of facilitating placements (1,2) this is not yet established specifically in a primary care cohort.

Barriers and facilitators to the provision of practice education in primary care have been identified (3) but as only 50% of the physiotherapists surveyed were active practice educators, it is difficult to determine whether these barriers are real or perceived.

In order to ensure we have new graduates who are 'primary care, practice ready clinicians', it is imperative we have physiotherapists in primary care who are willing to adopt the practice educator role , and further that current issues with practice education in this setting are identified and addressed.

Aim of Study

Identify and consider the factors that influence the provision of practice education in primary care, using physiotherapy practice educators, working in this setting and facilitating student placements.

Methods

• Qualitative approach ➡ focus groups

• Purposeful sample of physiotherapists in Primary Care

• Questioning framework designed, piloted and refined

• Data transcribed, coded and thematic analysis completed

• Data coding and interpretation reviewed by second researcher

"you could give a referral to a student …… and that frees you up….. twice as much work could be done" Participant J

"my practice would improve with the student around. You are thinking, you have to explain, you have to reason, planning, timetabling, my caseload management becomes better" Participant F

Diagram 1

Student Competence and Professionalism
⬇

Service Efficiency Professional Practice
⬅ -ve   +ve ➡

⬆

Workplace Characteristics

Physical	**Cultural**
Adequate physiotherapy staff numbers including local educational supports, Clinic space, Admin support	Teamwork; between paired Practice educators and across the wider Primary Care team

"scheduling is a huge problem.... sometimes you just feel you are drowning in the amount in the background that you have to do, and to prepare for the student" Participant A

References

1: Davies R, Hanna E, Cott C. 'They put you on your toes' : Physical Therapists' Perceived Benefits from and Barriers to Supervising Students in the Clinical Setting. Physiotherapy Canada Spring 2011: 63 (2); 224-33

2. Sevenhuysen S. L., and Haines T. The slave of duty: Why clinical educators across the continuum of care provide clinical education in physiotherapy. Hong Kong Physiotherapy Journal 2011: 29, 64-70

3: McMahon S, Cusack T, O'Donoghue G. Barriers and facilitators to providing undergraduate physiotherapy clinical education in the primary care setting: a three – round Delphi study. Physiotherapy 2014: Mar 100 (1) : 14-19

Results

11 practice educators completed the focus groups.

The main themes identified that influenced the provision of practice education in the primary care setting were Service Efficiency and Professional Practice.

Physiotherapy practice educators reported multiple benefits as a result of facilitating practice education including enhanced service capacity and service development, aswell as improved clinical reasoning, reflective practice/communication/teaching and management skills, job fulfilment and contribution to the profession. Despite the benefits outlined above, some practice educators also reported increased personal stress, reduced service capacity and deference of non-clinical duties to non-placement time as barriers to the provision practice education.

The positive and negative experience of both primary themes as outlined above were influenced by student characteristics/competency and workplace characteristics, both physical and cultural (see Diagram 1).

Discussion

Practice Educators may benefit from further professional development on
• Efficient models of practice education and supervision style
• Strategies that promote practice educator health and wellbeing

The importance of attributes such as student competence and professionalism should be reinforced to students in modules relating to preparation for placement.

Key message: Placement facilitators need to identify the specific issues in each primary care site and look at an individual plan that will fit the context of that site.