

Evaluating a multi-sector pre-registration training programme in North Wales: perceptions of pre-registration pharmacists and their tutors

Introduction

For the 12-month period from August 2016, six pre-registration pharmacists (pre-regs) in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) experienced pre-registration training through a multi-sector programme. This programme provided training in hospital, community and primary care pharmacy environments. Over the course of the training year the trainees spent 40% of the time in community, 40% in hospital and 20% in primary care. This was run concurrently, not sequentially, which meant that on a weekly basis the trainees spent two days in community, two days in hospital and one day in primary care. This programme is the first of its kind in Wales.

Focal Points

- Innovative multi-sector training programme for pre-registration pharmacists
- Formative evaluation to shape future training programmes

WEDS (Workforce, Education and Development Services) commissioned a formative evaluation of the new pre-registration programme.

Aim and Objective

The aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of this new programme in preparing trainees for day-one pharmacy practice. The specific objective was to obtain stakeholder opinions on preparedness for day-one pharmacy practice as well as their perceptions of their respective training programmes.

Methods

The small scale, explorative study adopted a comparative design and used qualitative methods to gather data. Semi-structured one-to-one interviews and focus groups were undertaken with pre-reg trainees following the programme and their tutors; and for comparison, pre-regs completing a hospital-only or community-only training programme. We followed a topic guide with probes to explore participant demographic details, experiences of pre-registration training/supervising pre-regs and opinions about the respective programmes. Interviews were conducted at month-6 and month-10 in the 12-month programme. Repeat interviewing allowed exploration of opinion change as pre-regs progressed through the training. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed. Ethics committee approval was granted from Cardiff University.

Results

Twenty-two participants were interviewed (six multi-sector pre-regs, five tutors, six hospital pre-regs and five community pre-regs) at month-6. All but three participants were followed up at month-10 (n=41 interviews in total). Four themes were identified:

- 1) programme value to pre-regs
- 2) programme value to other stakeholders
- 3) value of cross-sector experience to hospital and community pre-regs
- 4) suggestions for change.

Programme value to multi-sector pre-reg

Participants were overwhelmingly positive in their opinions towards the multi-sector pre-registration programme. Although for the pre-regs themselves, it was not everyone's first choice of training programme, at month-10, there was consensus that they would all choose to do the programme again as first choice. The view of a number of tutors was that the multi-sector programme produced "rounded" pharmacists with an ability to work in more than one sector upon registration. They argued that it improved pre-reg confidence in communicating and allowed them to take more ownership for their training year.

Programme value to other stakeholders

Stakeholders included community pharmacy, hospital pharmacy and patients. Pre-reg tutors based in community pharmacy stated how the multi-sector programme had given them and their staff a greater insight into other sectors. The perception of those based in hospital pharmacy was that the multi-sector pre-reg brought into the hospital the confidence built from community practice. As a consequence of this programme tutors perceived that patients may benefit from closer working between sectors. Multi-sector pre-regs themselves agreed with this sentiment and felt the programme allowed them to do more for patients.

Value of cross-sector experience to hospital and community pre-reg

Community and hospital pre-regs made frequent reference to their experiences in other sectors through their pre-reg training programme. Comments were on the whole positive with cross-sector experiences seen as important and enjoyable, even if the pre-reg had no interest in working in that sector.

Suggestions for change

Some issues arose during the year. Some were addressed for the current cohort. Many challenges were not exclusive to the programme. While multi-sector pre-regs were initially supportive of the weekly structure, the proposal to change the timetable such that trainees spend a whole week in one sector with a day of primary care every Wednesday as welcomed. Both tutor-tutor and tutor-trainee communication could be challenging. Recommendations include better use of IT solutions (e-mail, online diaries) and telephone communication. Scheduling of meetings would benefit from more advanced notification. Enhancing primary care experience and addressing geographical challenges were other areas identified for change.

Discussion

This programme is the first of its kind in Wales to offer pre-regs the opportunity to experience structured training in community, hospital and primary care pharmacy environments. While other cross-sector programmes are available in England and Scotland, there is currently no published work on their value and effectiveness. A pilot scheme established in England in 2015 offers pre-regs the opportunity to spend one-day-a-week for 8 weeks in a GP environment (Pharmacist Support, 2017).

This study provides an insight into stakeholder perceptions of the pre-registration training programme in North Wales. It has identified that both pre-regs and their tutors have positive perceptions of the programme. Interviewees identified benefits in preparing pre-regs for practice and suggested wider benefits within the pharmacy community, as well as ways to refine the programme for future cohorts. Limitations included the following: pre-reg interviewees had no other programme with which to compare their training, interviewees were interviewed at month-6 and 10, this was the first time the programme had been run and there were small numbers of respondents, some involved in the development of the scheme. Nonetheless the findings in this exploratory study are valuable for those developing multi-sector pre-registration training for pharmacists in the UK.

Those thinking about implementing a multi-sector pre-registration programme may wish to consider:

- The balance of providing both structure and flexibility within the timetable
- The management of stakeholder expectations such that individuals involved in the multi-sector programme are well-informed of the roles, responsibilities and unique needs of pre-reg pharmacists
- The importance of communication in the programme (particularly between tutors in different sectors and between tutors and pre-reg pharmacists themselves)
- Geographical location of training sites, so that pre-regs are able to travel with relative convenience between sectors

Follow-up evaluation

The initial cohort will be followed up 6 months post registration as well as their new line managers.

For the 2017-18 intake there are 6 pre-reg trainees following the amended BCUHB programme. There are 4 pre-reg trainees within Cwm Taf University Health Board and 2 pre-reg trainees in Hywel Dda University Health Board following multi-sector programmes.

All three University Health Boards are following slightly different models but the amount of time spent in each sector will be identical. The three different programmes will be evaluated during 2018.

References

Pharmacist Support, 2017. *Finding a pre-registration placement*. Available at: <http://www.pharmacistsupport.org/fact-sheets/finding-pre-registration-placement/> [Accessed 02/06/2017]

Authors

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