Patient involvement in undergraduate curriculum development

This page is aimed at people who work in medical education and training. It gives information about involving patients in curriculum development at the Leicester Medical School.

What does the patient involvement initiative entail?

Patients are pivotal in supporting medical student learning. Every day patients allow medical students to learn about clinical and supportive care during their consultation with doctors and other healthcare professionals. Enabling patients to steer curriculum design and lead teaching has remained a challenge, despite directives to medical schools to engage patients within faculty teams.

Since 1995, patients have been involved to help design and steer student learning within the interprofessional theme of Leicester Medical School. This has led to the design of the Leicester Model of Practice-based Interprofessional Education and numerous publications. Subsequently, this progressed to sharing curriculum design with disabled people in 1998 who shaped the content of a course called Learning from Lives. We have now progressed further to train patients to lead teaching and learning and involve them in faculty work.

How is it organised?

Helping patients to lead teaching was further energised by a grant from the Higher Education Academy in 2005. Patients became partners and were supported to design teaching they felt was relevant for health and social care students. Using a participatory action research design, patients designed a one-day event called the Listening Workshop (Anderson et al, 2011).

In the workshop patients, service users, and carers tell their stories of experiences of health and social care to small groups of interprofessional students. Students engage in a conversation and are required to actively listen. The service users and carers join the students who feed back their key learning relating to their patient conversations. Patients who shared their stories join the interactive feedback session at the end of the day. The patients then give feedback on the students' communication in a written format using a feedback form they designed.
Further training has led to some of these patients taking on leading roles in the workshop as co-tutors. Others have become mentors who consent and support new patients to join the patient and carer community. As a result some of these patients have gone onto take up other roles in the medical school, eg admissions and support groups.

**Detailed information**

**Positive impact on both medical students and patients**

Research findings have shown a positive impact on student learning, as well as changes within the faculty where a patient perspective is now perceived as pivotal to all teaching. This will further evolve in a new curriculum emerging in 2016 that places an emphasis on patient involvement. The patients themselves have benefitted through the emotional and personal development and through being recognised as a member of the medical school.

**Interprofessional design**

This work was been supported through interprofessional partnerships, as many other professions such as social work, have a long history of working with patients in teaching and learning. Once a small project is developed, communities of patients naturally become engaged within the medical school and become valued assets for teaching and research. Dedicated time, support and financial reward will be required.

**I want to learn more**

For further information, contact Professor Liz Anderson at esa1@le.ac.uk.