



Embedding research into Allied Health Professional roles within an ICU setting

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Background

- Healthcare research and innovation is key to ensuring safe, evidenced based practice as well as, improving patient care and outcomes. Despite these benefits, only a limited number of allied health professionals (AHPs) have access to research exposure and specific positions that encompass research.
- Recently, Health Education England developed a research and innovation strategy for AHPs which outlines the need for research opportunities to be available for all AHPs.
- The aim of this project was to increase research opportunities for AHP's within an acute Teaching Trust (UHBW).

Methods

A number of simultaneous strategies were instigated:

1. Local capacity and capability funding was obtained for an AHP secondment into the ICU nurse research team for a six month period. This post was supported by the lead research consultant and ICU research Matron. The UHBW competency framework was utilised to support development of the physiotherapist's research knowledge, skills and attributes.

2. UHBW and local HEI collaborated to develop a 'clinical academic placement' for undergraduate physiotherapy. Students were exposed to clinical hours on ICU, alongside involvement in an ongoing PhD feasibility study. An integrated training programme ran alongside the placement which included GCP training, critical appraisal skills, journal clubs and peer support.

3. A series of research themed workshops were developed and hosted by UHBW for nurses and AHP's from UHBW and the wider BNSSG network. Topics covered included Writing for publication; Introduction to Statistics; Academic Writing; Literature searches and critical appraisal skills.

4. Clinicians have enrolled in the NIHR Associate PI scheme

Recommendations and next steps:

- The secondment demonstrated that AHPs can work effectively within an ICU research team. AHPs have the skills, learning and experience for research roles traditionally advertised for registered nurses. Such a post provides multiple learning opportunities for clinicians.
- Exposure to research at undergraduate level beyond the classroom is important and also a feasible placement opportunity. Feedback from students was positive and so continuation of such placements is of importance.
- Consideration of embedding research experience and learning back into clinical practice post secondment is an important next step to promoting a research culture amongst AHPs. Ongoing challenges remain regarding navigating an AHP research career within a medical research infrastructure which include recurrent funding and research post opportunities.

