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Pilot programme to support a skills and competencies-based workforce in medicine

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Aims

The aim in creating this innovative degree programme is to find a sustainable solution to medical workforce planning in hospitals reliant on 'middle grade' temporary staff to cover medical rotas such as those in remote and rural areas.

Methods

The local university hospital trust has been investing in the training of advanced clinical practitioners (ACPs) to cover house officer (HO) and senior house officer (SHO) rotas at the hospital. This has led to a composite workforce model based upon a team of clinical staff drawn from a variety of professional backgrounds, selected and trained to carry out the traditional HO, SHO and middle grade roles with overall supervision provided by consultant physicians. With this training well established, the trust and university began to explore the idea of a qualification that would allow professional groups like ACPs and physician associates (PAs) to develop the necessary skills, competencies and professional attitudes to undertake middle grade level cover without compromising patient safety. In order to design a suitable curriculum, the university looked at similar programmes in the USA and existing curricula of advanced practice in the UK.

Results

It was concluded that someone completing this qualification would need to be able to demonstrate that they had similar levels of knowledge, skills and professional attitudes to those demonstrated by medical graduates providing the same cover. The final program has therefore been based on the curriculum for core medical training. The programme is delivered in a work-based environment with structured weekly teaching and close supervision from a consultant physician. Degree students have access to the joint JRCPTB ePortfolio to record their learning. The 2-year programme is open to PAs and ACPs who have at least 2 years postgraduate experience and the support of their employing trust to undertake the qualification.

Conclusion

Five ACPs working at the trust are currently undertaking a pilot MSc in 'Hospitalist medicine' with the university. On successful completion of the programme it is intended that graduates will be able to demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skills and professional competencies to provide safe middle grade cover for medical wards as a part of a skills and competencies-based workforce. This is the first such programme of its kind in the UK and aims to assist trusts that have extensive reliance on locum middle grade medical ward cover in addition to providing routes for career progression for PAs and ACPs. ■

Conflict of interest statement

No conflicts of interest to declare.

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