Description

Embedding the PMA in Midwifery Education: Part 1

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Summary

The University of Hull offers a comprehensive Professional Midwifery Advocate (PMA) service to student midwives. The aim is to support student wellbeing reducing attrition. Introductions to PMAs from the University and Practice placement occur in their first week, they then experience timetabled group Restorative Clinical Supervision (RCS), access to a team of PMAs, an anonymous online discussion board and wellbeing days. Teaching about the A-EQUIP model and the role of the PMA is embedded in the curriculum, so that upon registration they are familiar with the elements of the model and have already experienced the benefits of accessing PMA support.



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Introduction

This blog will outline the integration of the PMA and A-EQUIP model within the midwifery curriculum at the University of Hull. Our objective is to ensure the students understand the A-EQUIP model and experience PMA support as a student, so that they understand the benefits of seeking further support as a registrant.

There is a recognised gap between midwifery theory taught at university, and the realities of practice,[1] Additionally, it is widely acknowledged that the transition from student midwife to registrant can be stressful and newly qualified midwives require support to retain them in the midwifery workforce.

Attrition of newly qualified and early career midwives is recognised[2] with this group being the most likely to suffer burnout, and subsequently leave the profession.

A literature review[3] exploring the emotional wellbeing of newly qualified midwives concluded the need for mentorship and preceptorship, proposing facilitation of this may reduce attrition improving both physical and emotional wellbeing.

Therefore, our midwifery programmes introduce and regularly revisit the elements of the A-EQUIP model and the team of midwifery lecturers offer regular RCS.

History

The University of Hull was one of the first providers of postgraduate PMA education and has had lecturers who are PMAs since its inception. The focus initially was on providing RCS to students in the clinical areas. During the COVID-19 pandemic the need for RCS grew, but logistical challenges posed by lockdown forced this online. This was provided in year groups, sessions were weekly, optional and attendance was good. As restrictions were lifted attendance dropped until it was decided to stop providing them and re-evaluate the best way forward and integration into our newly accredited midwifery programmes. Following the pandemic, recruitment of staff who were established PMAs and training of existing lecturers left us in the privileged position of having five full time PMA’s in the team.

Current provision

The role of the PMA’s in university and practice is introduced in induction week for all new starters. PMAs from practice also attend. There is at least one taught session for each year group on the role of the PMA and the AEQUIP model, culminating in the final module of the programmes which focuses on supportive cultures and the transition to becoming a newly qualified midwife. Group RCS is provided within the programme at several points. In addition, we run PMA of the week, where one member of the team monitors our group PMA email address and offers individual support with results being fed into national PMA activity data returns.

A wellbeing day has recently been introduced into each trimester, offering students a range of activities such as yoga, craft, mindfulness, walk with a therapy dog, reading and hand massage alongside copious amounts of tea and cake! While the PMA team lead this day, all midwifery team members are encouraged to participate. It has been well received by staff and students; below are some quotes from anonymous student feedback:

"A good way to…recharge and do things you wouldn't normally have time to do in your day-to-day life! When do you get time to make a scrap book or meditate whilst juggling university, placement and family life?"

"It was nice to be with you as people not lecturers"

"Loved it! First one I have attended and I wish that I had attended the previous ones. It was very relaxed and lovely to talk casually with the lecturers and other students. Good start to the new trimester"

"Cake and colouring in, a nice opportunity to mingle with our cohort and see our lecturers as human"

"We had a really nice opportunity to relax after exams, speak with our peers and lecturers and eat good sweet treats. Definitely want to attend another"

"This afternoon was well and truly needed after the exams. We got to relax and talk to cohort and lecturers and do some self-care, the hand scrub was amazing. It made me feel human not just stressed"

"The day is really useful to get students from all years together, there's no pressure with work it's just nice. The clinical skills are really useful to run to practice and gain confidence."

"A very lovely and positive experience. Yoga and mindfulness sessions were amazing. Perfect day and opportunity to chill and reconnect after exams! Thank you for the cake :)"

Clear themes that emerged from feedback on our wellbeing days; connecting with peers, connecting with lecturers, and exam stress and self-care. Similarly, feedback from staff suggests that the benefits of the wellbeing day extend to the midwifery lecturer team and enhance student-staff relationships. The Ockenden report [4] recommended that the wellbeing of staff, as individuals and as part of a wider team, is prioritised, recognising that structured support is needed and that this will contribute to their ability to provide compassionate care.

Conclusion

The integration of group RCS, PMA of the week and wellbeing days into the midwifery programmes embeds the role and ethos of the PMA and A-EQUIP model throughout the curriculum, ensuring students are aware and experienced in the benefits upon entry to the register. It is hoped that this approach may encourage our students to consider undertaking postgraduate education within this field.

Part two here explores the themes identified within our wellbeing day feedback and their significance to our approach to midwifery education.

References

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Part 2 of this blog is here

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1. education
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