



Promoting the value of research to student nurses

Student nurses are given the opportunity to learn about mental health research – and how to locate the evidence they will need to inform decisions they take about treatment and care – during time spent with the Mental Health Research Network regional office (hub) covering East Midlands and South Yorkshire.

The hub offers experience, generally lasting six weeks, to three students a year who are training to be mental health nurses on courses run by the Division of Nursing at the University of Nottingham.

These placements aim to enthuse students about research, so they become actively involved in projects when they qualify, says hub manager Ann Priddey. It's also helpful for student nurses to learn about how the evidence they will use in their working lives is generated, she says.

Nurses-in-training spend about half their time on placements, the

majority of them in hospitals or community-based services. The placements offered by the East Midlands plus South Yorkshire MHRN Hub are 'fairly unique,' says Ann. She and her team give students an insight into the way research is undertaken, the various rules and regulations governing projects, and the way people are recruited to participate in research studies.

The hub office is based within the Institute of Mental Health at the University of Nottingham, and students are also encouraged to talk to researchers based there to find out about different projects and



Ann Priddey: aiming to enthuse student nurses about research.

ways of getting involved in research. 'We expose them to the complete research process, from "I have an idea" to recruiting on the ground,' she says. The students also learn about what the Mental Health Research Network does, how it works with NHS organisations, and the role of the National Institute for Health Research.

During placements, students need to be supervised by a mentor, and three of the hub's clinical studies officers who are registered mental health nurses undertake this role. Hub manager Ann Priddey is also a trained (but no longer registered) psychiatric nurse.



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Getting involved in research may be a low priority for busy mental health nurses, already carrying a heavy workload.

They may not realise that research can help, rather than hinder their working lives, and improve the quality of care that people with mental health problems receive, says Rangeni Zinyama from the Mental Health Research Network (MHRN) Heart of England regional office (hub). She is coordinating a project that aims to explain and promote the benefits of research to both student and qualified mental health nurses – and encourage them to collaborate on projects, or run their own studies.

The MHRN Heart of England Hub has teamed up with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust and three universities – Birmingham City, Wolverhampton and Birmingham – to develop learning materials for student mental health

nurses at all three universities. The materials will focus on what research is, methods that are used, how research teams work collaboratively with people with mental health problems and how to plan a project. They will be available online for the 2011 academic year and will include specially-made videos of interviews with nurses who have carried out, or been involved with, research projects.

Academics from the three universities are involved in preparing the materials, which also include links to useful websites, relevant literature and book references, and information explaining the world of research as well as the process.

A new scheme initiated as part of the project means student nurses from Birmingham City University will be able to spend part of one of their

placements learning about research. The arrangement will start in 2011 – students who are undertaking work experience with a community-based service run by Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust will work with staff in the Trust's Research Innovation department and in the Heart of England Hub for one day a week. 'Students will be able to find out about the research projects we support, how research operates and how we recruit to studies,' says Rangeni.

The partner organisations also plan to develop learning materials about research for registered nurses already working in mental health services who are continuing their professional development. These too will be accessed online and will initially be available to nurses working for Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, and then to nurses working at all the trusts involved in MHRN-supported studies through the Hub.

read about the MHRN East Midlands plus South Yorkshire Hub's work with student mental health nurses over the page