

Undergraduate Education for Medicines Optimisation Principle 1: The 'Socialisation Internship' and views from Mosaic Clubhouse, one of the partner organisations

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Abstract

Title

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Summary

This article describes the development of a Social Internship, which involves pharmacy students working on a volunteer basis with one of a range of partner organisations. This placed students in an environment and people that may have been 'out of their comfort zone'. The work of one partner organisation (Mosaic Clubhouse) with the experience of students who undertook their internship there is described. It is hoped that their experience will motivate other pharmacy stakeholders and education policy-makers to consider mandating this type of experience more widely.

Keywords: patients, volunteer, charities, King's College.

Introduction

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society's (RPS) principles of medicines optimisation¹ have been embraced by NHS England as having the potential to improve patient outcomes and to promote the best use of medicines. It is clear that NHS England and the Department of Health sees a future for pharmacy in providing clinical services to patients. The pharmacy profession needs to urgently capitalise on this mandate and ensure that medicines optimisation activities are firmly integrated into transformation plans and local development.² The lead author of the RPS principles of medicines optimisation document has said previously that "...the real challenge for all healthcare professionals is in Principle 1 (i.e. understand the patient experience), having an ongoing, open dialogue with the patient and/or their carer about the patient's choice and experience of using medicines to manage their condition. It sounds straightforward but it's a change in mindset."²

Pharmacy educators must play their part in 'changing the mindset' of the profession by helping pharmacy students and novice practitioners to take Principle 1 seriously, recognise that this is

arguably the weakest area of pharmacy practice, and to overcome the influence of poor in-practice role-modelling that some students report being exposed to in their formative years.

A typical MPharm degree contains placements, most of which are set within pharmacy practice environments. We would argue from experience that the main purpose of these placements is for students to gain an understanding of how pharmacy works in practice and to experience the use of medicines and the processes surrounding this. Whilst many schools of pharmacy have increased the exposure of their students to real patients, we suggest that there is an urgent need to 'immerse' students in environments that give them first-hand experience of the 'life world'³ of people, whether or not they are patients. This is in order that they develop the clinical empathy⁴ that we believe is central to an ability to 'understand the patient experience.'

The aim of this article is to share one initiative from King's College London and the perspective of one of our placement providers, the Mosaic Clubhouse.⁵

What is the 'Socialisation Internship'?⁶

We contend that the imperative to understand the patient experience suggests that pharmacists should display a certain level of clinical empathy within their practice. By understanding why a patient does or does not take certain actions regarding their health, life or lifestyle, clinicians such as pharmacists are better able to negotiate a plan of care with the patient.

In order to help our students at King's College experience how people think and make life-decisions, a 30 hour, non-clinical self-directed internship was integrated into the 3rd year curriculum. Students were instructed to apply for a volunteer position, choosing from a list of organisations who had agreed to partner with the university, to complete a minimum of 30 hours volunteer work. The aim was to put the students in an environment that may be 'out of their comfort zone', with people that they would not necessarily choose to be with. By making the internship non-clinical, we removed the restrictions related to patient safety that normally apply. Moreover, we were influenced by a similar successful experience from the Welsh School of Pharmacy.⁷

A range of organisations were identified via a web search for charities working with people in our local area, which was defined as within half an hour's travel of King's College London Waterloo campus. Contact was established via email, explaining the aims and objectives of the internship, and site visits were conducted to organisations who expressed an interest in being involved for a more comprehensive discussion, including a risk assessment and other governance and practical arrangements. The following organisations agreed to host students for the first iteration of this initiative:

- Mosaic Clubhouse - provides support and opportunities to people living with a mental health condition
- Ace of Clubs - this is a family-like community providing transformative support for those who are homeless, vulnerable and otherwise marginalised in our area
- Dragon Hall – a Community Centre, focussing on youth work
- Coach Bright – mentoring of secondary school students
- Body and Soul – a charity supporting those with and affected by HIV
- Age UK Islington - working with potentially vulnerable adults

Students were fully briefed, during which they were informed of the requirement to keep a log of their interactions with clients and colleagues during their internship hours, and to reflect on how they met the learning objectives. These objectives were based on RPS Medicines Optimisation Principle 1 and GPhC performance standards for pre-registration trainees:

- Develop skills to understand the patient experience for use in your future practice.
- Develop the skills to remain composed and personally effective in all situations.
- Develop the skills to amend your behaviour, when necessary, based on evaluation of your performance by yourself or others.
- Discuss the personal impact of the internship on you and how you manage this.

- Replicate the work ethic that will be expected of you as a professional.

At the end of the 30 hours, a debrief session was held at the College, where the students shared their experiences with each other and facilitators. Following this, a group oral examination formed the assessment for the internship.

The Mosaic Clubhouse

Such was the success of the internship, as measured by debrief feedback and evaluation forms, that we wanted to provide a specific socialisation internship narrative from one of our partners, the Mosaic Clubhouse.

About Mosaic Clubhouse

We are not a traditional health setting, nor are we a traditional day hospital. Our model is deliberately understaffed so that we need our members, people living with serious mental health conditions, to volunteer their skills and talents to keep the organisation running. It is important, therefore, that the model is never diluted if we have an influx of volunteers or supernumerary students. We believe that recovery from a serious mental health condition is made possible by the positive impact that volunteering has on our member's self-esteem and confidence. We are organised into three work units that are open from 9.00 – 5.00pm. Members choose how often they come, when they come and what they do when they are here. We have three work units; the business and administration unit; the cafe and maintenance unit and the employment, education and information unit. We also offer an out-of-hours social and wellness programme and we run an evening sanctuary five nights a week from 18.00 - 02.00 for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis. A strength is our wide and varied partnership programme that brings many different organisations through our door and as a result provides lots of opportunities for members; they meet and greet, provide IT support for meetings and away-days; cater for lunches, and are sometimes invited to join meetings to give their opinions on local issues by local decision makers.

How our Partnership with King's College began

When we were approached by Kings, it was a surprise. They explained that pharmacy students did not acquire the skills necessary to engage with members of the public as part of their degree. They felt that this was an essential component of their training, especially in relation to Principle 1 of the four principles of medicines optimisation. They asked whether we would be willing to provide placements. We considered this request very carefully, and we said yes! Our initial intake was 19 students spending 30 hours each at the Clubhouse.

They have fitted right in! Attending our morning planning meetings, pitching in with the work day, working 'side-by-side' with members – the Clubhouse mantra! Working at a member's pace, always showing the member how something is done and letting the member try it out. They have warmth, patience, inquisitiveness, knowledge and skills – the perfect combination. It has been impressive watching them tackle anything asked of them with enthusiasm and humour. Members love meeting new people, they love hearing about other people's lives and journeys. The informal nature of the Clubhouse and the close

side-by-side working often encourages very meaningful conversations to take place spontaneously; this is the nature of the recovery journey here.

We deliberately avoid discussions about diagnosis and treatment at the Clubhouse; we are a non-clinical environment that engages with the person not the illness. Wellness, however, is very much our business. We have healthy eating sessions, keep-fit, yoga and Pilates for instance. So we decided to ask some of the students to work on a wellness project with members; to research some facts and put a notice board together with lots of information to educate members and enable them to make healthy choices. This is something that we have not been able to dedicate enough time to so we are really pleased to have their expertise.

We pride ourselves on being an open, outward looking community that is keen to embrace new ideas and initiatives. Thank you for asking us to join this initiative it has been incredibly positive and we will continue without hesitation to work together in the future.

Pharmacy Students' feedback post-placement at Mosaic Clubhouse

Here, we reproduce the testimony of two of our third year students on their experience at Mosaic Clubhouse, followed by some feedback gained from the evaluation conducted amongst the third year cohort during the student debrief and through a short written evaluation.

Student 1

Mosaic Clubhouse is a completely different experience from what I expected. I had anticipated staff leading various activities for the members in this Clubhouse and I would find a distinct segregation between the two groups. Instead, the members and staff both work side-by-side to run the Clubhouse so that it can flourish, which in turn helps to integrate the members back into the community. For example, in the employment and education unit, I assisted a member to develop his word processing skills and hunted for job vacancies so that the members could find part-time employment. I collaborated with the members within the business and administration unit to create a poster promoting the importance of well-being. There was also an opportunity to work in Mosaic's night service, the sanctuary where we interacted with Lambeth residents in crisis.

Although my volunteering was short, it was filled with amazing opportunities to work within a heart-warming place where it is indistinguishable to tell the members and staff apart from each other. Mosaic Clubhouse is one of many clubhouses internationally. It is astounding that they are able to co-operate together to improve and ensure that their clubhouses thrive. This experience will be remembered as I continue to strive to be a pharmacist with good patient rapport and I would definitely recommend to anyone to spare some time and volunteer.

Student 2

Prior to coming to the Mosaic Clubhouse, I had various expectations of what the experience would be like, whilst still being anxious about entering this new environment. Knowing that the Clubhouse is a facility for mental health patients, I expected the environment to be more clinical with a greater

distinction between the club members and the support workers. However, my assumptions were proven wrong. I arrived to a warm and hospitable welcome by people at reception thinking that they were support workers but, to my surprise, they were members. One of the things I admired the most about the Mosaic Clubhouse was that the members were so well integrated with the staff and the whole culture of helping one another and the sense of one community. Also, I found that all the members play a part in the day-to-day running of the Clubhouse and after speaking to them I found that they feel a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment due completing these various tasks.

Student evaluation

The face-to-face group debrief at the College was a rewarding experience for the facilitators and students. The session included a structured and facilitated sharing of experiences, implications for personal development, and wider application to future practice as a pharmacist. At the end of the session, students completed a written evaluation form. Key feedback received is summarised as follows:

89% of students felt that their experience would benefit their future practice, including a greater awareness of their responsibility to treat their future patients holistically:

"The internship reminded me how lucky I am to be training to be a professional who has the ability to provide care, not only in terms of drugs, but a responsibility for their lifestyle and support outside of appointments"

Another student stated that this was an experience they would not have had through their traditional university experience:

"The internship allowed me to work with groups of people who I probably wouldn't have before ... I can understand people better and this is an experience you cannot teach"

86% of students recommended that the internship should continue to be part of the MPharm programme, with many believing that all healthcare degrees should incorporate similar experience:

"Before, I felt [the internship] was pointless. Now, I think that it's really good and should be part of the course for students in other healthcare degrees as well... it opens up the world out there"

80% of students reported personal development gains in a variety of ways:

"[I am] more confident in my abilities to speak up in larger groups of people... [I have] better insight into working with a team of people from different backgrounds with different experiences – listening to each other and building upon each other's ideas"

"It's good to get some perspective... [the internship] allowed me to grow before being thrown in the deep end"

61% of students reported that the internship had led them to amend their behaviour in some way:

"I came out of the experience a more active listener... it really

improved my communication skills – not in the way I talk to people, but more in the way I listen to others now. I listen not to reply but to understand what they mean”

72% of students reported that the internship had helped them to ‘see patients as people’, with mentions of development of empathy in the feedback received:

“I noticed that I had a prejudice about addicts that I hadn’t known about, until my opinion was completely changed after day one. From this internship I have gained perspective and empathy, it was truly an eye opener – I gained more information in this internship than I would in any lecture”

Summary

For pharmacy to become a truly clinical profession, a key element is an ability to understand the patient experience. Development opportunities are limited within MPharm degrees due to limited clinical exposure. The Socialisation Internship is one contribution that has, in its first year, changed the way in which our students think about people, communicate with them, and see themselves personally and professionally. We hope that our experiences will motivate other pharmacy stakeholders and education policy-makers to consider mandating this type of experience more widely.

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