Transitioning Allied Health into the digital world of a new quaternary hospital – an educators perspective

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Background

Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH) is Perth's newest quaternary hospital. It boasts a range of information communication technology (ICT) for clinical applications including a digital medical record, electronic patient journey board, electronic referral system and a virtual desktop. Many of these systems were new or modified for WA Health and FSH staff had no or minimal prior exposure to them. This report describes the challenges encountered by the Allied Health (AH) Education Team (ET) in providing support to more than 300 staff across 11 professions to learn and functionally use these systems from day one of hospital opening.

Methods

ICT training was commenced with all staff during a generic orientation program. AH staff received further orientation which included targeted training in the various ICT programs. Various models of delivery were used to acknowledge different learning styles. This included eLearning, self-guided checklists, instructional pamphlets and online resources. After hospital opening group and individual tutorials were provided to reinforce learning and assist with problem solving.

Results

Challenges faced in implementing this program include:

- catering for staff with differing pre-existing levels of ICT knowledge
- providing opportunity for training specific to individual requirements (e.g. inpatient vs outpatient)
- teaching clinical applications that weren't yet automated or fully integrated
- teaching clinical applications that were constantly being updated and improved
- contending with the substantial cognitive and psychological load training imposed on staff
- a lack of retention of ICT skills caused by delays between orientation and commencing work.

Discussion

The challenge of introducing staff to a new work setting, new processes and new technology should not be underestimated. Implementing a comprehensive education program grounded in adult learning theory influenced the success of this initiative. The lessons learned from this process may help inform other services about to undergo a transition to a more advanced ICT environment.

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