

Building Bridges for AHP Dementia Practice Education, 2013-2017

Informed, Skilled, Inspired

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AHP Dementia Practice Education: A Fresh Approach

AHPs share a potential to greatly enhance the wellbeing of people living with dementia. If the aspiration is for our future AHP workforce to be prepared, AHP students must have access to opportunities to develop their dementia abilities. AHP student placements are well established in NHS or local authority services but less so within the third sector. AHP trainees traditionally will not cross paths with people with dementia until a later stage in the progression of the disease and only within a public sector setting. A fresh approach that involves exposure to all phases of the illness within the range of available services is required. The Alzheimer Scotland AHP Practice Education Programme is a partnership approach to supporting our future AHP workforce to develop their dementia practice in line with Promoting Excellence at the informed and skilled levels (Scottish Government, 2011) through offering students:

- *Experience of working with people living with dementia, therefore contributing to the skills of the future AHP workforce.*
- *First-hand experience of Alzheimer Scotland as the leading organisation in dementia.*

And people who come to Alzheimer Scotland:

- *The opportunity to work with a range of allied health professionals for mutual benefit.*

Educational Experiences: 100 AHP Students

Dementia Informed Learning Experiences

This focussed package comprising of: an introduction to Alzheimer Scotland and Dementia Friends session, one or two visits to Alzheimer Scotland and a feedback session is aimed at students early in their training and links to the Dementia Informed Practitioner level (Scottish Government 2011)

Over 2 academic years, **72** students took part.

56 Speech and Language Therapy Students from the University of Strathclyde visited Alzheimer Scotland Daycare Services in the West of Scotland, **16** Dietetics students from Queen Margaret University visited Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Cafes in the Lothians

Students were asked to answer one simple question: During your visit to Alzheimer Scotland, what was important for you?

"..what mattered to me was seeing real people with dementia as it is something I have had very little contact with and I know that there are many pre-conceptions that people have about the disease and I wanted to challenge these ideas. I also wanted to see how the third sector plays a part in dementia care and to see if I wanted to get involved in my SLT career."

Dementia Skilled Practice Placements

Longer practice placements provide students with an opportunity to work towards becoming Skilled Dementia Practitioners (Scottish Government 2011). Student AHPs are supported to meet their learning objectives by a named mentor within Alzheimer Scotland and by an HCPC Registered Supervisor from their own profession within the NHS, Social Services or University.

Between 2013 and 2016, a total of **28** AHP students completed an Alzheimer Scotland Practice Placement:

17 Occupational Therapy Students, **2** Music Therapy Students, **6** Art Psychotherapy Students, **2** Physiotherapy Students

AHP students in Alzheimer Scotland learn within services where there is no previous history of input from their profession and as such, this can be seen as a role-emerging placement. Responses to the end of placement questionnaires reflect the benefits of being challenged to work autonomously at this later stage in their training.

"Though I am a student, this placement has allowed me the autonomy to become a true occupational therapy practitioner. The placement pushed me to take initiative when it came to my learning and has allowed me to gain confidence in my skills and abilities, as well as, to create and implement things I would have never have thought of doing. Through projects such as the sensory room and occupational engagement programme, I have successful bridged the gap between theory and practice. The placement has taught me the necessity of evaluation and has illuminated the role of occupational therapy in dementia care."

Activities and Impact

Daily tweets using
Twitter hashtag:
#AHPDementia

Dementia in
Scotland Articles

@AHPDementia
Instagram
account

Conference
Poster
Presentations

Photography
Projects

Blog Entries

@adrienneahpmh
@elaineahpmh

Partnerships

Adrienne McDermid-Thomas, AHP Practice education facilitator and Elaine Hunter AHP Consultant coordinate the programme, working within Alzheimer Scotland to develop partnerships to support AHP Placements

6 Partnerships have been developed with Higher Education Institutions

Queen Margaret University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Robert Gordon University, University of Strathclyde, York St John University, Glasgow Clyde College

Placements and internships have also been supported by AHPs from 8 NHS Boards, the AHP Practice Education team at NHS Education for Scotland, the Scottish Dementia Working Group, Santander Universities and by the respective professional bodies.

A pilot of the Ryan Harper Model ran in partnership with PAMIS

A strategic alliance between Alzheimer Scotland and Queen Margaret University (1 April 2015) has strengthened the dialogue and programme of work with the development of AHP Internships, an Alzheimer Scotland AHP PhD studentship and a new AHP dementia MSc module on rights based AHP practice

Making it work

Challenge must be balanced with support and it is important that the right people are available. For this to function effectively, a national coordinated and cross-sector approach to Practice Education in Alzheimer Scotland has been useful and the Practice Education Facilitator role has been pivotal in establishing and in maintaining the partnerships. In looking ahead to sustainability and the continuation of a programme essential to AHP dementia education a strategy for ongoing strengthening and building of bridges is essential.