Advancing Clinical Practice in Mental Health

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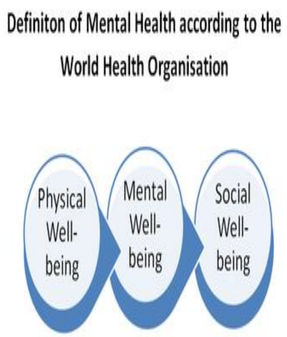
Introduction

There is recognition that that there are significant deficits/gaps in advanced clinical practice for mental health. (Health Education England Council of Deans, 2019). In 2016, London Southbank University pioneered an MSc Advanced Nurse Practice in Mental Health course, the first specific mental health advanced nurse practice course in England at that time, accredited by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN). The course has evolved through co-production with students and in September 2019 was extended to include other disciplines in line with the Advanced Clinical Practice Multi Professional Framework (Health Education England. 2017). This course is currently the only specific advanced clinical practice course for mental health that is accredited by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) in England.

The aim of this study was to explore real world impact of the course on the students' clinical practice, care delivery and the perceived value of these newly emerging roles to mental health services.

The study looks at the impact of the course to date through the lens of student perception.



Methods

Participants included students at various stages of the course from January 2016 to July 2019. The study used a preliminary qualitative evaluation of student experience using semi structured questionnaires, with the results analysed using a thematic analysis framework.

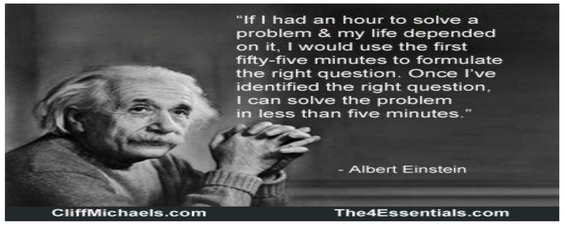


TABLE 1
PHASES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS
(ADAPTED FROM BRAUN & CLARKE, 2006)

	PHASES	DESCRIPTION OF ANALYSIS PROCESS
1	Familiarising myself with data	i) Narrative preparation, i.e. transcribing data ii) (Re-)reading the data and noting down initial ideas
2	Generating initial codes	i) Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across entire data set ii) Collating data relevant to each code
3	Searching for themes	i) Collating codes into potential themes ii) Gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4	Reviewing themes	i) Checking if themes work in relation to the coded extracts ii) Checking if themes work in relation to the entire data set iii) Reviewing data to search for additional themes iv) Generating a thematic "map" of the analysis
5	Defining and naming themes	i) On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells ii) Generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6	Producing the report	i) Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples ii) Final analysis of selected extracts iii) Relating the analysis back to the research question, objectives and previous literature reviewed

Results

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data has shown a trend and congruence in the positive impact of this role in: difference made to clinical practice and care delivery; feedback from patients and carers; managers/colleagues noticing a difference in care delivery, which includes direct impact on quality of patient care; publication, participation in research; promotion; senior job elsewhere; teaching; setting up physical health clinics.

Examples of Student Work settings:
Substance Use Services
Psychiatric Liaison Services
Acute Mental Health Services
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

"There has indeed been an alteration in my practice in that I now utilise higher level clinical assessment skills e.g. physical assessment and diagnosis, which informs treatment and onward referral. In addition, attendance at the leadership module encouraged me to seek promotion and the research module enhanced my critical appraisal of the evidence base and encouraged me to be more assertive in debating it"

Student Sample: 14
Student Response: 8

Conclusions

As the first course of its' kind specifically for mental health practitioners, our findings show an emerging picture of the potential long term benefits of these advanced clinical practice roles to enhance care delivery in mental health services and respond to ever increasing levels of complexity and need. This has implications for higher education, workforce planning and development going forward to future proof mental healthcare.

Acknowledgements

With sincere and grateful thanks to all the pioneering students currently on the MSc Advanced Clinical Practice for their thoughtfulness and hard work in introducing and promoting these roles in practice and continuing to co-create the course going forward.

I would also like to thank the experts by experience who work with me on the delivery of the course.

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