

Assessing Needs for Continuing Professional Development in Evidence Based Practice

J. Harris, A. Dewey,
T. Dean, S. Shepperd, D. Ward
& K. Wortham

Background

- The National Health Service has established policies for continuing professional development that emphasise evidence based practice
- Other countries, such as Canada and The United States, are also establishing standards
- Little is known about the ability of EBP courses to meet the CPD needs of health professionals
- Methods for evaluating the relevance of courses need to be developed

Aims of the project

- To assess the CPD needs of health professionals who attend a postgraduate Certificate in EBHC
- To use the information to identify categories of learning needs for future course evaluation

Methods

- Data extracted from application statement
- Data obtained from two postgraduate Certificate focus groups
- Both groups asked to discuss ‘Reasons why you wish to enrol on this course’
- Focus group asked to evaluate whether learning needs were met

Sample by gender

Sex	Focus group	Application statements (Oxford)	Total
Females	14	25	39
Males	12	35	47
Totals	26	60	86

Sample by health professions

Profession	Focus group (Ox)	Focus group (Ports)	Application statement	Total
Doctors	7	1	22	30
Allied health	5	6	17	28
Managers	1	1	15	17
Researchers	1	1	9	11
Academics	2	1	5	8

(Totals exceed 86 as some cited more than one professional role)

Sample by total number of students on course

- Focus groups:
 - 52% of Portsmouth group represented (10/19)
 - 70% of Oxford (16/23)
- Applications:
 - 22% of total number of attenders over the past 6 years (60/276)
 - includes those who attended for 1, 2 or all 3 of the modules

Data collection methods:

Oxford & Portsmouth focus groups

- Groups held in month 7 of course
 - Co-facilitated by tutors from the other institution
 - Tape recorded with some observational notes
 - Participants asked
 - *What are your reasons for doing the course?*
 - *Why did you choose this particular course?*
 - *What are the barriers and facilitators to completing the course?*
 - *What aspects of the course have been useful? Not useful?*
 - *Will the course have any effect on your career?*
 - *Will it have any effect in your work place?*

Data collection methods: Oxford Application statements

- Application statements collected before people enrol on the course
 - 6 cohorts from 1997 – 2001 included
 - 10 from each student cohort randomly selected
 - 60 of the student applications reviewed
 - Statements from applicants who were not accepted were not included
 - Participants asked:
 - *What are your reasons for doing the course?*

Data analysis

- Focus group data independently analysed (JH/KW and AD/DW) and categories then compared
- The 1997 cohort of application statements was independently analysed (JH and SS) and then compared
- Areas of disagreement resolved through discussion and comparison
- List of CPD needs generated
- Categories used to code remainder of data
- Data coded by AD and JH with some revision and clarification of categories

Findings from statements:

'Reasons for doing the course'

- 41 - Facilitate decision making
- 34 - Need to obtain knowledge of clinical research
- 33 - Previous exposure to related training or literature
- 29 - Teach others
- 16 - Generate research findings
- 14 - Improve searching or critical appraisal skills
- 12 - Obtain an academic qualification
- 11 - Broad, applied nature of course
- 7 - Evaluate and monitor service delivery
- 5 - Network with other professionals
- 5 - Obtain professional credibility
- 4 - Prior study positive and productive

Facilitate decision making

- Encouraging others to adopt an EBP approach
- More autonomous decisions
- More well informed decisions
- For individual patients as well as for health care systems

Obtain knowledge of clinical research

- Keep updated with information
- Be able to challenge the quality of research findings
- Help to develop present role
- Career change or career pathway

Previous exposure to related training or literature

- Other research training
- Health technology assessment training
- EBP training - short courses
- EBP literature

Teaching others

- As part of professional teaching role
- As part of clinical or managerial supervision
- Informally communicating skills to colleagues

Generate research findings

- Specific, work based problems that require local research
- Contribution to national research agenda

Evaluate and monitor service delivery

- Evaluate efficacy of therapy
- Evaluate effectiveness of service
- Create guidelines and monitor performance against them

Reasons for choosing this particular course

- Focus on applied skills
- Location
- Able to complete at own pace
- Able to complete MSc to desired level
- Formal qualification
- Personal recommendation

Focus groups:

Factors affecting completion of course

- Time management
 - Availability of study leave
 - Flexible work arrangements
 - Protected time at work
- Attitudes of colleagues
 - Cover for work commitments
 - Interest in project
 - Interest in using new skills

Focus groups:

Aspects that have been useful

- Question formulation more focused
- Searching skills have increased access to a wider range of information
- Increased knowledge of research design, especially qualitative
- Methods for implementing change
- Learning about different clinical experiences

Focus groups:

Aspects that have been problematic

- Problems accommodating different levels of baseline knowledge, in statistics (Portsmouth) and computing skills
- Methods for implementing change not seen to be as important as learning about research design (Oxford)
- Difficult to complete assignments and projects on time
- Need better Internet access for searching
- Better access to databases
- More presentations from clinicians on managing change
- More small group learning (Portsmouth)

Focus groups: Potential effect on career

- More confidence in reading research
- More confidence in presenting and using qualitative data
- More confidence to question others' interpretations of research findings
- Better understanding of health management issues

Focus groups: Potential effect on the work place

- Not confident about using new skills
- Not confident about having enough information for informed decision making

Conclusions

- Decisions to enrol are based on a combination of factors:
 - Prior exposure to EBP or related training
 - Focus on applied skills
 - Flexible schedule
 - Location
 - Need for knowledge to support current role, or prepare for a change in role
 - Opportunity to obtain a professional qualification and while completing a work based project

Conclusions

- People begin the course with a set of needs and expectations that include:
 - Increased confidence in clinical and managerial decisions
 - Resources and skills to address evidence gaps
 - Skills to integrate EBP with current teaching approaches
 - Skills to develop methods for evaluating and monitoring the use of evidence

Conclusions

- Focus group data indicates that some aspects of the present courses do not match learning needs
- Ability to meet learning needs should be monitored over the long term and findings should be built into course development

Next steps

- Assess whether learning needs were met through comparison of application statements with the final essay on learning experiences
- Use data to develop more relevant methods for evaluating the effectiveness and utility of EBP training
- Evaluate transferable skills over the long term