

Clinical Placements in Pharmacy: Development of an on-line learning module to orientate students to clinical practice

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AIM

To develop, implement, and evaluate an on-line learning module ('ePlacement') that would maintain and/or supplement experiential learning within pharmacy programs.

METHOD

The ePlacement was designed as a web-based learning module, depicting aspects of pharmacy practice across the continuum of care using mixed media and other resources, and incorporating specific student activities. Development of the module involved collaboration between academics and designers to conceptualise the module, confirm content, obtain/provide feedback, modify module as required, produce/ retrieve resources (e.g., video clips, images, sound recordings, narrations, etc), and develop and analyse evaluation surveys. Student feedback was elicited in a 3-part survey (Jan-March 2008) comprising Likert Scale responses and open-ended questions to gauge: student expectations of module, immediate impressions following its completion, and final opinions after completing a 'live' clinical placement.

OUTCOMES

Overall, most students "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" that the module provided a broader insight into practice, presented new information and resources, and helped them better prepare for clinical placements. Two key features were particularly appreciated: the overview of the healthcare system, and presentation of career options in pharmacy. Whilst the module was well received, a proportion of students were challenged by the need for self-direction, including time management, in completing the module.

An alternate learning mode to help orientate students to pharmacy practice settings has been successfully developed and implemented, resulting in students being more prepared for 'live' clinical placements and more confident and able integrate into the clinical practice site. This module may help decrease the time spent orientating to 'live' placements, and alleviate the challenges of placement site shortages.