Promoting Skills Acquisition

Promoting the Acquisition of Clinical Skills in Practice

If you are returning to this section or undertaking for the first time, consider the following:

- How do you facilitate a student’s learning?
- What tools do you use?
- How do you evaluate their learning competency and proficiency?
- What is the value of a learning contract?
- What is the value of a formative assessment?
- What could be the outcome, if you or the student don’t value or invest in the planning and reviewing progress?

Teaching and Assessing in Practice

- All qualified professionals are involved in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Clinical skills development relies on the gradual attainment of competency through a progressive educational framework.

Competency Development

- Adult learners are individuals with unique qualities and life experience.
- Adults are predominantly self-directed and instrumental in what they learn.
- Adult learners must be motivated and understand what relevance the skill will hold for them in the future.
- Individuals have unique preferences which are relative to their personal learning styles and therefore require imaginative, flexible approaches to teaching and facilitation.

Peter Honey and Alan Mumford (1986) Using your learning styles, Maidenhead

Adult Learning Theory

Gestalt “Learning through insight”.

“Practice is perceived to be an important part of the process.”

Kenworthy (2000) Teaching and Assessing in Nursing Practice an Experiential Approach Edited by P Nicklin

This involves organising the components of a given situation or problem, so that patterns and solutions emerge. The process is therefore, as important as the outcome.

The process of skills attainment and application in clinical practice

Professionals and students learn most successfully when:

“New knowledge and skills are built onto the foundation of what they have already learned and directed by what they need to know.”

Goldstein et al (2005)

Individuals are encouraged to actively, not passively, participate in the process.

Consider a skill required of students in your workplace

- Why is the skill required?
What background theory is needed?
What about legislation/resources/Health and safety and equipment?
How can the skill be practiced safely?
Who are the experts that will teach and support skills acquisition?
What criteria will demonstrate competency?
How will competency be maintained?

General Principles

- **Why?** Is the skill required?
- **Background theory?** Previous knowledge and knowledge required.
- **Resources/Health and Safety/Legislation/Guidelines?**
- **Practice?** Simulated, Supervised.
- **Who will supervise me?** Qualified experienced staff.
- **Assessment?** How?
- **Competence?** Regular practice.

Clinical Practice Example: Administration of Medicines

- **Why?** Key clinical skill
- **Theory?** Pharmacology (Associated A & P) Knowledge of drugs/doses/routes/interactions/therapeutic-side effects.
- **Legislation?** Medicines Act/Associated Policies, Procedures & Guidelines/Documentation (Record keeping), Consent
- **Resources?** Pharmacy/BNF/Drug information leaflet.
- **Health & Safety?** Patient identity/physical/psychological condition/co morbidity. Infection control/Patient monitoring.
- **Simulated practice?** Practicing the skill using a scenario
- **Assessment?** Criteria

Clinical Skills – in Practice

- Assess prior knowledge and experience.
- Establish learning priorities and set clear objectives.
- Frequent dialogue/communication. (Give regular, unrestricted feedback.) Tell them what you know!
- Be innovative and imaginative in your delivery!
- Provide plenty of opportunities for practice.
- Supervise then stand back!
- Assess with confidence.
- What good mentoring activities are demonstrated here?
- How does the student respond?

Section Summary

Now re-consider the following:
What is the value of an action plan/learning contract?
What is the value of a formative assessment?
What could be the outcome? If you or the student don’t value or invest in planning and reviewing progress?

Further reading