A COLLABORATIVE MODEL FOR WOUND CARE EDUCATION

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Introduction

It is the responsibility of all nurses to ensure they maintain their professional knowledge and competence (NMC 2008). Patients with wounds are cared for in a variety of healthcare settings, by a number of clinicians, during their journey of care. For this reason a structured and consistent approach to wound management education is of value. Moreover, education should be seen as the vehicle to transfer knowledge and skills required by healthcare professionals (HCPs) to promote a high quality healthcare service. 

Coupled with this it has long been debated as to the level of support offered and required by industry to educate HCPs on the corrected use of their products.

As the challenges in healthcare delivery continue to increase, alternative methods of education delivery need to be considered. It is the aim of this paper to provide an insight into how a wound care company collaborated with a higher education institution and a healthcare consultant to package and deliver a high quality endorsed educational package.

Method

Advanced Medical Solutions (AMS) have developed a wound care educational package that is modular based and covers the fundamentals of wound assessment and wound management. The resource is to be offered to healthcare professionals in a series of 5 modules, including basic skin anatomy and physiology, wound healing, wound assessment, dressing selection, and wound classification/management.

The resource also includes competency tests for the clinicians to complete and certificated for the clinicians’ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) files. This allows the learner to assess their own uptake and retention of knowledge.

This collaboration, supported by Real Healthcare Solutions, is a successful indication of how industry can work closely with an academic institution to develop education with the potential to directly benefit healthcare professionals who treat patients with wounds.

The support from Real Healthcare Solutions allowed for direct engagement with the University of Chester including the topic specialist, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the legal team. All of whom allowed for a resource to be assessed and deemed of high quality and fit for purpose.

The University of Chester was identified as the university of choice to support in the assessment and endorsement of the package. AMS chose to work with the university on the endorsement of the educational content due to the Faculty’s commitment to, and credibility in, health and social care.

Engagement with the university has ensured that the content of the resource is objectively assessed and relevant to current wound care treatment regimes. This collaboration will ensure that the package is reviewed annually to ensure continued accuracy and relevance.

The university assigned both a content specialist and a grammatical lead to the project. All references and images used as well as the content were assessed for authenticity and relevance.

The most up-to-date references were used in all cases. The university will continue to support and engage with AMS to ensure that the educational resource is assessed and updated each year.

RESULTS

The collaborative working has allowed for a modular based educational resource to be developed which the content has been endorsed by a national higher educational institution. This has allowed for the content of the educational material offered by the company to its customers (health care professionals) to be assessed by the university to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Chris Meredith, Chief Executive Officer of AMS, explained:

"Working alongside the University of Chester has been an ideal partnership. Not only has it allowed us to benefit the wound care market with appropriate high quality education, but it also provides this at no cost to the NHS."

Professor Mike Thomas, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Social Care, at the University, said:

"Working alongside a global medical devices manufacturer like Advanced Medical Solutions gives the University of Chester real insight into the wound care industry. Coupling our expertise illustrates how industry and academic institutions can work together to benefit healthcare professionals by providing them with contemporary and relevant, clinically applied education."

There are a variety of ways that registered practitioners can access CPD activities to develop their knowledge and skills base in tissue viability, an essential element to deliver evidence-based care, if support is sought from industry to educate HCPs on the correct and cost-effective use of their products then a level of quality assurance should be applied.

NHS trusts are constantly challenged to achieve a balance between their resources and meeting the needs of the population they care for (Stoedinova 2004). One way this may be achieved is through working in partnership with a commercial company. This is further reinforced through guidance on working with companies, which states that, "all joint working projects must promote and enhance equitable access to evidence-based health care" (DH 2010).

By embracing the support offered by higher educational institute in assessing and endorsing educational resources companies will have an opportunity to present educational platforms that are credible and deemed fit for purpose. It is in the best interests of all those working in the partnership, including the health care authority, commercial company or higher education institution, to ensure that cost-effective wound management is carried out to benefit the patient. Inappropriate wound care can result in delayed healing, loss of confidence in the clinician by the patient and poor use of resources.

There is a perceived risk that educational information offered by industry may be biased in favour of the products sold by that commercial company. However, by ensuring that the educational resource offered by commercial companies is assessed by a higher educational institution, the product placement and company bias will be removed and the content assessed for academic rigour.

The Department of Health has suggested that by creating new partnerships between the NHS, universities and industry, staff would have consistent and equitable opportunities to update and develop their skills. Educational partnerships between healthcare organisations and commercial companies and HEIs can provide a creative way to deliver education and bridge the theory-practice gap (DH, 2010). The success, in educational terms, of this collaboration now requires proper evaluation.

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