

# **Curriculum and Pedagogic bases for integrating practice experiences within higher education**

## **Case study #1: Oral Health practitioners' practice in aged care residencies (University of Newcastle)**

### **Program focus**

This program prepares graduates to work in the field of oral health, focusing on oral hygiene and prevention of oral disease. The students' practical experiences include their ongoing engagement with staff and residents of aged facilities in providing advice and planning for and exercising direct oral hygiene care.

### **How practice or workplace experiences are provided**

Groups of three final year students work as oral hygiene teams in residential care facilities for half of a day each week, on an ongoing basis across a semester. In these facilities they provide carers with advice about and support for dental hygiene practices. This practice includes developing a plan to improve oral hygiene in the facility. They also worked directly with residents who are largely elderly in providing oral hygiene services and providing advice and information for residents. The program includes students developing a plan for oral hygiene within the facility, the development of educational resources for carers and plans of care for individual residents. In each of these facilities, there is a staff member who acts as a mentor for the students, and provides advice and support. However, the students conduct their activities largely unsupervised. A facilitator initially engages with these facilities, checks for suitability and issues associated with duty of care to students.

### **How those experiences are integrated into the course curriculum**

These experiences are integrated into the overall curriculum in the third year of the students' program in the following ways. Before, the students participate in these practical experiences they participate in a one-day workshop that has been specifically developed to prepare them for this on-going role. The first half of the workshop program aims to familiarise students with the particular requirements of oral hygiene for these clients. In short, it provides a conceptual overview of the requirements for day care. In the afternoon, the workshop focuses on developing communication skills and also particular strategies for dealing with elderly and possibly residents who are suffering from forms of dementia. This provides specific skills and also strategies associated with tailoring oral hygiene practices to the needs of these residents. Included here are strategies to make adapt to the needs of elderly clients. During the semester, the students receive feedback from a mentor either directly or on a Web-based discussion system (Blackboard). Also, the students prepare a reflective journal on their experiences, and also have their own non-mediated Web-based discussion board for their sharing experiences, hints etc. This discussion board allows them to share their experiences and practical suggestions about addressing issues they might face during their practicum. At the end of the semester, the students develop posters about strategies for developing oral hygiene in these facilities and have a feedback meeting in which the posters are discussed as their practicum experiences.

### **Particular curriculum practices**

Ongoing engagement, hence practice; authentic oral hygiene activities (planning, practising, resources and technique development), sequencing of experiences - final year students have the competence and confidence to assist, teams formed by self-selection, residences allotted by student preference/location, ongoing experiences.

Care now being taken to avoid students being placed in circumstances that are overly and unhelpfully confronting (highly demented residents). Problems with turn over of carers in aged care facilities

### **Particular pedagogic practices**

Preparatory workshop, including opportunities for role plays, and developing specific skills, use of discussion board, as official site for feedback and instruction, and also a non-moderated one for students to share experiences etc. Reflective logs, discussion boards, poster sessions are also used to share learning.

### **Any evidence**

Highly rated by students, demand growing from other sites and elsewhere in NSW

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