

# **Evaluation of the Physician Assistant (Anaesthesia) Practitioner**

Prof. Morag Gray

Dr. Jayne Donaldson

Sue Hendry

Dr. Dermot McKeown

Lucie Page

Prof. Julie Scholes

Fiona Smith

## **Aims of the project**

- To evaluate the education of Physician Assistant (Anaesthesia) Practitioner (PAAs) students from selection to graduation
- To evaluate the impact and perceived impact of implementing this new role on existing members of the theatre team, the public and wider staff within the NHS in Scotland

# Methodology

- Longitudinal design
- Comparative case study approach
- Sample
  - Students from first 2 cohorts (n=23);
  - Course Team (n=9)
  - Clinical Tutors; Supervisors and Consultant Anaesthetists (n=24)
  - Members of Theatre teams (n=25)
- Data collection methods
  - Documentary analysis
  - Face to Face Interviews
  - Focus Group Interviews
  - Telephone Interviews
  - Online survey
- Constant Comparative Data Analysis

# Overview of Findings

Four main themes emerged:

1. Coping with the Academic aspects of the course
2. Resistance to Acceptance
3. Learning from and in Practice
4. Expectations of the role

# **Coping with the Academic aspects of the course**

- Students coped successfully with academic aspects of the course
- Like other students in the NSS, they complained about a lack of formative and summative feedback
- Students believed that the preparation of their Clinical Tutors / Supervisors could be improved so as to improve the nature of academic support that they received.

# Resistance to Acceptance

- Different perceptions about the integration of the new PAA role within the theatre team were captured.
- Acceptance or resistance seemed to be related to whether there was:
  - Role clarity or role uncertainty;
  - An understanding of the course of preparation;
  - Concerns regarding role encroachment
  - Resistance to cultural changes required when introducing a new role into existing practices and
  - Whether students were viewed as a threat.
- Over time there was less resistance and more acceptance by immediate members of the theatre team.

# Learning from and in Practice

- Some students revelled in being challenged (in a supportive way) to move out of their comfort zone.  
*“I am consistently getting job satisfaction and my confidence is increasing. I am much more relaxed at work and at the end of the day I come away feeling that I have made a useful contribution. I am even fired up to get the books out when I get home in order to prepare for the next day!” (Laura Student Cohort 1)*
- Over time, students became used to driving their own learning agenda along with increasing levels of confidence.
- All students stressed the great benefit they derived from practising and learning in the Simulation Centre.
- Final OSCE – students reported a mismatch between what they had anticipated would happen and the actual experience. This led to a call for improved preparation

# Expectations of the role

- There was a persistent and distinct lack of clarity of what PAAs would actually do once qualified and whether there would be jobs for them on completion of their course;
- Students reported that some Health Boards were much more positive and forward looking in terms of the longer term value of the role than other Health Boards.
- PAAs were beginning to be seen as having a worthwhile role to play as part of the team.



# Recommendations

- Need for clearly articulated need for the PAA role that stakeholders can recognise and accept.
- There needs to be clear and consistent role definitions, boundaries and explanations provided to all stakeholders
- There needs to be raised awareness in practice settings of the patient information sheets regarding the role of PAAs in their treatment.
- Need for further study to evaluate the PAA role post qualification and to study the economics and practicalities of implementing the PAA role in the Scottish NHS as different types of hospitals may have differing needs.

# Any questions?

