

Unit Eight

Quality improvement from an education provider's perspective

Key messages

Reading this unit will:

- describe the support that is available to general practices to help them introduce quality improvement methods
- highlight the potential role that education providers can play in supporting practices and health care assistants (HCAs).

Establishing the general practice as a learning organisation requires support from educational establishments and general practice tutors.

Education and training on those aspects of clinical governance that can lead to quality improvements is key. Many of the courses mentioned in *Unit 5: Education and training* include modules on how to achieve quality improvement. Courses on clinical governance can be found at <http://www.wisdomnet.co.uk/default.asp> and curriculum advice can be found on the Royal College of General Practitioners' website ([http://www.rcgp.org.uk/corporate/responses/curriculum/pdfs/Clinical Governance.pdf](http://www.rcgp.org.uk/corporate/responses/curriculum/pdfs/Clinical_Governance.pdf)).

More focused education and training is likely to be for the more advanced or experienced HCA who is working independently in the practice team, and contributing to the education, training and support of other HCAs.

Traditionally, general practice management has evolved organically, rather than being strategically planned. Strategic planning, however, allows the systematic review of quality issues. Programmes to improve management and team working are increasingly being demanded. As HCAs develop their role and begin to look at career planning (see *Unit 6: Career planning and development for health care assistants*), some of them will want to join practice nurses and other healthcare professionals in measuring quality.

Quality-related training

There are a number of courses available on quality improvement and these are outlined below.

1. The Health Services Management Centre <http://www.hsmc.bham.ac.uk/programmes>

This Centre provides courses on quality improvement. Some of these, particularly the shorter modules, could be emulated by education providers or access to them provided. Some practice team members, including HCAs, will want to improve their quality-improvement skills in this way. Details of some of the relevant courses are reviewed overleaf.

HSMC G52H: Involving Consumers in Health Care Quality

This 20-credit module considers the **development of public and user involvement in healthcare**. It explores consumerism and other models of the relationship between professionals and patients, user involvement in healthcare decisions and community participation. Different methods of involving the public and users are examined. The role of the public in specific advances in healthcare, such as primary care groups and trusts, and recent initiatives, such as the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and patients' forums, are also examined. This module is taught in a 1-week block.

HSMC G57H: Introduction to Health Care Quality

This 20-credit module examines the development of quality management in healthcare. Areas covered include concepts, definitions, and models of quality and their application in the private and public sectors both in the UK and internationally. The development of a quality strategy is explored as well as current initiatives, such as clinical governance. This module is taught in a 1-week block.

HSMC G55H: Quality Measurement and Monitoring

This 20-credit module introduces students to data collection and analysis in quality management. It covers qualitative and quantitative measurement techniques, practical tools to analyse and monitor quality, and performance measurement and review. It covers:

- *standards*
- *clinical guidelines and their audit*
- *benchmarking*
- *external inspection approaches, such as accreditation*
- *problem-based approaches, such as complaints systems*
- *health outcome measurement*
- *the involvement of users in monitoring quality.*

This module consists of a 1-week block, plus two 3-day blocks.

HSMC G53H: Clinical and Professional Quality

This 20-credit module focuses on the measurement and improvement of clinical quality in healthcare, and the involvement of clinical professionals in quality management and improvement. It addresses:

- *the history and development of clinical audit*
- *the issues involved in measuring and managing clinical performance*
- *the links between clinical quality systems and general quality strategies*
- *clinical governance*
- *clinical effectiveness*
- *evidence-based practice.*

Recent developments, such as the purpose and nature of the Healthcare Commission and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, are also covered. This module is taught in a 1-week block.

The Centre also runs seminars and small-group learning sets, for example they are currently running learning sets for PALS managers and for Expert Patient leads. Participants meet for 6 days over the course of 1 year and the agenda usually comprises a mixture of exchanging information, sharing experiences and discussing issues. Invited speakers regularly give presentations and participants work on a variety of projects, such as the development of evaluation tools or information resources.

2. The Institute of Healthcare Management <http://www.ihm.org.uk>

The Institute have started to develop a new vocational training scheme for general practice managers that will help them improve quality. The Institute also validates courses run by others. (See <http://www.wipp.nhs.uk/23.php> for further information).

3. The NHS Clinical Governance Support Team

This Team run programmes such as the Primary Care Management Development Programme, which is currently being accredited at Foundation Degree level, with action learning sets for participants being organised by the NHS Alliance. (See <http://www.wipp.nhs.uk/24.php> for further information).

4. The Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Managers, Administrators and Receptionists (AMSPAR) <http://www.amspar.com/qualifications.php>

Many HCAs who were previously employed in the role of receptionists will already be familiar with the courses run by AMSPAR. Courses include one on medical terminology, which can be useful for becoming more familiar with the tasks of entering Read codes for quality recording.

Summary

- *General practices need the support of education providers to make the most of the quality improvement agenda.*
- *Education and training for HCAs needs to be tailored to the experience and role of the HCA.*
- *There are a number of providers of quality-related training that practices can use to support their staff.*