

## Unit Five

# Education and training of health care assistants from a patient's perspective

### Key messages

Reading this unit will:

- help you to understand where education and training fits into the health care assistant's (HCA's) role
- explain how training courses are developed and how patients can have a say in the process
- explain what you can expect from an HCA that is undergoing training.

HCA's have the potential to make an important contribution to the care of patients in our practices. As a patient, you will want to know that HCA's are properly trained to take on the tasks that they do in the practice.

HCA's undertake tasks that previously would have been undertaken by the nurses working in the practice. The nurse will be responsible for the work of the HCA and will want to be satisfied that the HCA is trained for the tasks that they undertake, eg taking a blood sample.

Taking on the role of HCA means making a commitment to training and learning. This training and learning will be supported by the practice and the primary care trust (PCT).

## How training and education is organised

Training courses are carefully planned to ensure that they cover the subject being taught and to ensure that the students will be ready to put their learning into practice once they have completed the course. Each training course will have to explain what will be taught, what students can expect to learn and how this will affect their practice (learning outcomes). Documents about the training and education of HCA's should be clear and made available to everyone, including educators, students, trainees and the public.

The learning outcomes contained within these documents should be developed with HCA's, patients, the public and colleagues from other professions wherever possible. The outcomes should be kept up to date.

The methods used to set learning outcomes should be:	The process for choosing assessment methods should be:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear</li> <li>• flexible</li> <li>• available to the public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fair</li> <li>• clear</li> <li>• available to the public.</li> </ul>

Information about how to feed back on the learning and development needs of HCA's and practices is in [Unit 4: Personal and professional development](#).

One of the ways that patients can directly input their expertise into training is through the Expert Patients Programme.<sup>1</sup> This programme enables volunteer tutors to pass on their knowledge to patients managing their own long-term conditions, as well as to HCAs.

HCAs should view patients as partners in their education and training, not as the subjects of it. Informed consent for procedures is essential so patients should always be aware of when the HCA is in training and being supervised. Procedures should be in place to:

- *notify patients attending an HCA-supervised training session in advance so that they can re-book to another non-training session if they feel this is necessary*
- *remind patients when they attend that this is a supervised training session*
- *enable patients to decline to see an HCA in supervised training*
- *make sure the patient is not excluded from any discussions about supervised procedures*
- *make the purpose of the supervised session clear*
- *treat patients with dignity and respect*
- *clarify confidentiality rules*
- *thank patients for their help and co-operation with training.*

## Summary

- *Education and training are essential to the HCA role.*
- *Training courses should have clear written information that explains what the student will learn.*
- *Patients should be involved in the development of training for HCAs.*
- *Patients can help by giving feedback to HCAs who are in training.*

### Reference

1. Department of Health. *Expert Patients Programme*. Department of Health website: <http://www.expertpatients.nhs.uk/involved.shtml>