

# **Can Assistant Practitioners be successfully integrated into the nursing skill mix of haemodialysis units?**

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# Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust

- 6th largest in UK
- 1.8 million
- 51 renal inpatient beds
- 8 Satellite Haemodialysis Units
- Dialysis growth 5% per year
- 1780 patients on Renal Replacement Therapy
- 900 on Haemodialysis

## **Problem**

- Shortages of Registered Nurses
- Expensive Agency Staff
- Overseas recruitment
- Vacant shifts

## **Was there another option?**

How could we ensure appropriately educated staff are recruited to the renal workforce to be able to care for increasing numbers of Renal Patients?

## **Aim**

To ensure a competent workforce continues to be available to care for growing numbers of haemodialysis patients by supporting structured, tailored education to unregistered staff.

## **Design**

Within the NHS Framework of 9 Levels, the Level 4 Assistant Practitioner was introduced in the North West of England in 2002, and gradually developed across the UK as described in

“Assistant Practitioner Scoping Project”

## How can you use assistant practitioners Band 4 to meet patient needs?

- Skill shortages
- Recruitment difficulties
- Career pathway

## Skills for Health

*“An assistant practitioner is a worker who competently delivers health and social care to and for people. They have a required level of knowledge and skill beyond that of the traditional healthcare assistant or support worker. The assistant practitioner would be able to deliver elements of health and social care and undertake clinical work that have previously only been within the remit of registered professionals. They may transcend professional boundaries, they are accountable to themselves, their employer, and, more importantly, the people they serve.”*

# Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust

## Renal Unit Project

- Supported 4 healthcare assistants (unregistered, Band 2)
- Foundation degree in healthcare ( funded by Health Education South London)
- The 2- year training programme
- Renal and Haemodialysis care competencies

## 2 Year Foundation Degree

### First Year

1 day every 2 weeks at University

Topics Covered :Communication

Nutrition and Hydration

Infection Control

Medicines Management

Documentation

Anatomy and Physiology of the Kidney

Functions of the Kidney

Renal Replacement Therapy

Haemodialysis, Peritoneal Dialysis

Transplantation

Working Clinically as Health Care Assistant on the Renal Ward for 1 year with mentor



## Second Year

### Haemodialysis

Supernumerary with practice educator for 6 weeks

### Clinical Competency Assessment

Topics Covered :

- Machine, Reverse Osmosis
- Dialyser & Membrane
- Preparing Patient for Haemodialysis
- Assessment including vital signs
- Haemodialysis Prescriptions
- Vascular Access

When Competent, continue to work as trainee Assistant Practitioner in Haemodialysis, not administering medication

## Health Care Assistant Band 2

Transfer patients from waiting room to HD chair / bed

Recording Weight / BP

Stripping and cleaning of HD machine, post treatment

Lining and priming machine

Stocking, cleaning, ordering

## Assistant Practitioner Band 4

Commences Haemodialysis Treatment, using Fistula, Graft or tunnelled HD Catheter.

Administers prescribed medication as a 2<sup>nd</sup> checker, under the supervision of a Registered Nurse.

Terminates Haemodialysis, administering medication as above

# Differences in Roles

# Success

- 2-year training programme
- Exams
- Coursework
- Practice based clinical competencies
- Medicines Management
- Bespoke Intravenous Study Day
- Additional Medicines management clinical competencies

# Medicines Management Competency Assessment

Including:

Drug Calculation

Medication Preparation

Allergies

Legibility

Patient name & hospital number

Drug, dose, route & frequency

Start & finish date

Prescriber's signature

Where there is any doubt to the accuracy, completeness or appropriateness of any prescription, report to registered nurse

# Medications

- Sodium Chloride 0.9%
- Anticoagulant
- Erythropoietin
- Intra-lumen Line Lock

# Summary

- Supervision
- Knowledge and Skill
- Tasks from registered nurse
- Working across traditional boundaries
- 6 weeks supernumerary
- Practice Educator
- Continuity of education and support

## Conclusion

- Progression opportunities
- Competent assistant practitioners employed
- Improved patient experience
- Reduction in vacant / unfilled shifts

A typical shift:

25 Haemodialysis Stations , Main Unit

1 x Band 7- Co-Ordinator

2 x Band 6 Renal Trained

3 x Band 5 Registered Nurse

2 x Band 4 Assistant Practitioner

4 x Band 2 Healthcare Assistant

- Minor Cost Saving £4,500 per assistant practitioner

## **Staff Comments**

‘I was hesitant at first, but the AP’s have shown initiative, they work really hard and are a valued member of the team’.

## **AP Comments**

‘The training was challenging, we found it hard to integrate into the nursing team to start with, but now we have demonstrated we are competent, we all work as 1 team’

## **Patient Comments**

‘They are great, I always ask for the AP to put me on dialysis, they are fantastic needlers!’



## Relevance

The strategy of integrating unregistered practitioners into the nursing workforce has challenged boundaries, however, to ensure a competent workforce continues to be available in the future, innovation and change are required. This project has been positively evaluated by patients and renal staff including the assistant practitioners.



↓ Renal Outpatients ↓  
Please wait behind the line  
until called to the desk

# The Future

Following on from the pilot group, an additional 5 healthcare assistants have been seconded onto the foundation degree, to enable them to also qualify as renal assistant practitioners.

1 of the initial Band 4 assistant practitioner is being seconded to complete Registered Nurse Training Sept 2016.

Thanks to all of the staff, particularly the Renal Practice Educators, tutors at Kingston University and the 4 Assistant Practitioners in making this project such a success.

**Thank you for you attention**

**Any Questions ?**