

Research Space
Journal article

A national renal nursing course

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Some years ago, 2018 in fact, I wrote in these pages about the Renal National Course that ANNUK have been working to develop with the assistance of the British Renal Association (now UKKA) and OCB Media.

You may be wondering what is happening with these plans, so I thought it timely to provide something of an update.

You may recall that the rationale for us working to develop such a curriculum was related to our frustration that there has been no recognised, nationally recognised renal nursing course since the demise of the ENB136 twenty years ago. Many of us who have been working in renal for a considerable number of years remember being told that career advancement within renal nursing was dependent on completing the course! There are still renal courses offered by a number of universities across the UK, but as there is no nationally recognised standard these differ considerably in their format – some include practice-based competency elements whereas others are entirely classroom (or in the last two years) virtual classroom based. There is no guarantee that a course undertaken at one institution will cover the same theoretical (not to mention practical) knowledge as a course from elsewhere in the country. Many such courses have also been forced to closed in recent years as universities declare them non-viable because their recruitment numbers do not reach certain thresholds.

Indeed, as the course director of a post-registration CPD programme in my own institution I had to take the painful decision of dropping my own renal module from the course portfolio because the local renal department was not in a position to be able to send the numbers of students necessary to meet our minimum number requirements. The gaps have often been filled by in-house training packages developed by renal units and private sector providers – but again there is no standardisation that enables a course or qualification to be national recognised.

One thing I have learned leading a CPD course is that it doesn't have to be that way! Within my own course we run specialist courses and modules for paediatric intensive care, Anaesthetic Practice, and Newborn and Infant Physical Examination that conform to standards set by national bodies and therefore are recognised nationally by employers. In the field of intensive care nursing the Intensive Care Society accredit specialist courses for critical care nurses that are recognised nationally as a requirement for nurses working within the field. Sadly, since 2002 such an option has not been available for renal nursing.

It is against this background that ANNUK decided to work on developing a national renal nursing course that we hope will ultimately achieve the level of recognition and indeed expectation that courses such as the ICU course and others enjoy.

The process started by identifying a number of subjects that we felt it would be essential for such a course to include. Modules being developed include; renal anatomy and physiology, Assessment and diagnostics, Self-management, person-centred care, Acute Kidney Injury, treatment preparation and choice, Transplantation, Haemodialysis, Home Therapies, Diabetes, Paediatric Transition, MDT working and patient safety. The next step was to identify a set of authors who were in a position to draw upon their clinical and educational expertise and write the modules that could go towards creating the desired national renal course.

Putting together such a programme of study has clearly taken time – especially as the authors have generally been renal nurses working in either clinical practice or academia effectively working on the material on top of their day jobs! Needless to say, the intervention of a Global pandemic has certainly not helped the process.

We now, however, find ourselves reaching the final stages of development process and are engaged in final checking of the material within the modules before we can be in a position to 'go live' this spring. Having seen many of the modules in their draft format I think that students will find them engaging and thought provoking. They are not simply passive e-learning in the traditional format but make use of case studies and interactive learning opportunities within the workplace to underpin the learning within the modules.

The course and modules will be made available via the new ANNUK web site (<https://ann-uk.org/>) and will be discounted to ANNUK members. It is hoped that they will come to be seen across the renal care environment as a standard requirement for nurses developing their practice in renal care.

Initially the course will not be formally linked to any higher education credits at either first degree or Masters level – that is a further stage of development and we wanted to make the course available first.

The plan later is to partner with, probably, a number of Higher Education Institutions to add a formal assessment component that will enable the National Renal Course to be included in post-registration CPD course portfolios. However, even before such a formal link up I know that many institutions (my own included) offer forms of open or negotiated modules which would very likely enable students to gain higher education credits for the work they complete undertaking the renal national curriculum.

So, as we enter 2022, with much uncertainty surrounding the world still because of the pandemic, do look out for the formal launch of the National Renal Nursing Course from ANNUK.

Senior nurses and managers – we hope that you will agree that the course is a valuable addition to developing our renal nursing workforce and will encourage your staff to undertake the course to develop their knowledge and skills as renal nurses.

Renal Nurses – please consider enrolling on the National Renal Nursing Course once it is available to help you develop your career and enhance your CPD. There may be ways you can gain educational credit for the learning – but in any event it will be valuable experience for your practice and as part of the evidence needed for revalidation.

We will be looking for volunteers from April onwards to test the content – if you would be interested in helping us in this way then please contact us at: info@ann-uk.org.

Watch this space!

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