Who Does What? Identifying Professional Contributions in an Inter-Professional Context

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Background

• Focus on evidence based practice
• Two dimensions:
  – Providing the right care to the right individual at the right time
  – The requirement for individual professions to demonstrate that what they do ‘works’
• Challenge in the context of inter-professional working
Evidence Based Practice

• Use of best available evidence to answer practice based questions
  – Finding
  – Appraising
  – Applying
  – Evaluating
• Clinical / professional judgement
• Client / patient preferences

Professional Requirements

• College of Nurses of Ontario (2002)
  Professional Standards demonstrated by ‘...contributing to the generation of new professional knowledge though research...’

• ‘...identifying research methods useful to the nursing profession; identifying resources to answer questions and sharing knowledge gained through research...’
Professional Requirements

• Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008)
  • ‘You must deliver care based on the best available evidence or best practice’

Evidence in the Intellectual Disability Field

• Parmenter (2001):
  – Many of the interventions used in the field of learning disabilities are ‘of uncertain value and...have never been tested’

• McKenzie et al (2006):
  – ‘the field of learning disabilities as a whole has a fairly robust evidence base’
Evidence in Intellectual Disability Nursing

• Limited extent of nursing research undertaken in this field (Northway et al, 2006; Griffiths et al, 2007) and no international comparisons

• Turnbull (1997) warned that an absence of an evidence base was ‘likely to be interpreted as evidence of the absence of a sound basis for nursing practice’

Evidence in Intellectual Disability Nursing

• Conclusions drawn by Griffiths et al (2007)

• ‘The overall quality of the research reviewed was poor in terms of strengths of designs used and sample sizes. Therefore, based on this, we must judge that the current body of learning disability research is not fully fit for purpose in terms of its extent, quality or quantity if a significant part of the purpose is to develop and evaluate interventions for practice and in practice’
A Specific Context

- Supporting clients whose behaviour challenges - inter-professional working
- Often involves nurses whether working in a residential or community setting
- What is the evidence base for nursing interventions?
- What evidence is there of effectiveness?
- Is it possible to separate this from the team contribution?
- If it is what is the value in doing so?

Search

- Metasearch – Cinahl, Medline, ASSIA and PsychInfo

- ‘Intellectual disability nursing’ + ‘challenging behaviour’ = 36 hits

- ‘Learning disability nursing’ + ‘challenging behaviour’ = 78 hits
Results of Search

- Duplicates removed along with any book reviews
- After initial review 33 papers remained
- After closer review 29 papers read in full

Recording

- Bibliographic details
- Research or review paper?
- Intervention?
- Mention of nurses or nursing?
- Nurse as author?
Key Findings

• All 29 papers reported research studies
• Only five reported an intervention (and in one instance this was manipulation of information given to staff)
• In 11 studies there was no mention of nurses or nursing
• One study referred in passing to nurses within the care setting and another inferred that nurses were employed within the care setting

Key Findings

• 16 studies made explicit mention of nurses or nursing:
  – They were participants in 9 studies
  – It was noted that they were working in 3 settings where research took place
  – They were mentioned positively by participants with intellectual disabilities in 1 study
  – They were involved in commenting on the extent to which a scenario devised for research reflected practice
  – They identified participants for one study
  – Nursing salaries were identified as an additional cost in one study
Key Findings

• In only two studies could nurses be identified as authors:
  – One study involved a nurse interviewing other nurses regarding their experience
  – The other study involved a 16 week experimental exercise programme in which a nurse was lead author and nursing assistants were involved in delivering the intervention

Some Observations

• Search failed to identify some studies that are available for example:
  – Gates and Wray (2001): interventions teaching behavioural interventions to parents of children with challenging behaviour
  – Slevin (2004): examined community nursing workloads and overall 28% of nurses work related to challenging behaviour
  – Mackenzie-Davis and Mansell (2007): included information concerning nursing establishments in Assessment and Treatment Units in England
Some Observations

- Changing profile with closure of institutions
  - 18 related specifically to challenging behaviour
  - 6 related to therapeutic interventions

Conclusions

- Nurses do make a key contribution to supporting people with intellectual disabilities whose behaviour challenges
- However, they are often invisible in the interdisciplinary research in this field
- May be a reflection of nursing as a ‘young’ academic discipline without a long history of research
- Nonetheless this means that evidence relating to their contribution is limited
Recommendations

• Continue to build inter-professional and inter-disciplinary research
• Try to ensure that specific contributions are identified and acknowledged wherever possible
• Challenge the view that individual professions need to demonstrate individual evidence of effectiveness when working in an interdisciplinary setting

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