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Commentary: Development and evaluation of a clinical research nursing module for undergraduate nursing schools: expanding Clinical Research Nurses' outreach

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The authors of this article highlight staffing shortages in this clinical specialty and a lack of knowledge about the role of Clinical Research Nurses as the rationales for their educational initiative. As a nurse, with 17 years' experience working in clinical research as a research nurse or manager in different specialities, it was evident that many nurses within the health service had not heard of Clinical Research Nurses, and those that had heard of the role did not know what it involved. While the COVID-19 pandemic may have improved the visibility of clinical research through the high-profile clinical trials supporting the development of vaccinations and treatments, there remains a lack of knowledge of the role of nurses in enabling and supporting this important work (Iles-Smith et al., 2020).

As an academic who has led programmes and taught clinical research courses, at both undergraduate and master's level, targeted at Clinical Research Nurses, the lack of educational preparation for the role is evident. Also, through discussions with many of the nurses on these courses, the scope and activity related to the role were only discovered once they were in post. Similar to the findings in this paper, of a lack of awareness of the role of a Clinical Research Nurse is evident in the undergraduate curriculum in the UK. Another study examined undergraduate nurses' knowledge of the role of cancer research nurses at four UK universities, and only 19% reported they had knowledge of the role, and of those, it was evident many had misconceptions (Hood et al., 2021). In addition, only a small majority would consider this a career option (10%). However, through a short educational session, those considering it as a career option increased to 65%. These articles both support the need for development of the knowledge of undergraduates to help address the vacancies in this specialty.

This evaluation clearly shows that a relatively simple educational intervention can enhance the knowledge of this speciality within nursing. It will be beneficial to see if education at the undergraduate level can help address some of the staffing deficits in the workforce.

References

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