

North-east COVID-19 observatory: issue 7.

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North-East COVID-19

Observatory

Issue 7—10th August 2020



Welcome

Welcome to our seventh issue in which we are focusing on higher education issues.

The bulletin is available two-weekly and will have a dedicated theme and contain news, professional matters, and relevant professional and light reading. Each issue will have one or two guest contributors with a specialist interest in the chosen theme. We value any feedback and encourage people to request themes or to send in resources that others might find interesting.

Fortnightly Theme: Higher Education & COVID-19

Our guest speaker this issue is **Professor Ian Murray**, Head of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice.



The School has played a key role in supporting the NHS to address the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The academic staff played a major role back in April upskilling returners to the NHS and other healthcare professionals such as podiatrists and dental nurses to step into key supportive roles within the NHS. This involved training in infection control and protection, the use of personal protective equipment as well as some fundamental caring skills such as washing, assisting with eating, mobilisation and the recording of vital signs.

Since April over 500 stage 2 and 3 RGU student nurses and midwives commenced paid placements within the NHS and care home sector and the school doubled its support for students in practice. The School worked to support NHS Boards in Grampian, Orkney, Shetland, Tayside, Highland and the Western Isles during this challenging time. Around 300 final-year student nurses and midwives are currently spending the majority of their last 6 months of their courses working and studying to transition into qualified nurse and midwife roles in September and October this year.

The school was delighted to have won, back in May, a CSO tender with the project title "a qualitative investigation of health and social care (HSC) early entrant experiences and coping strategies during rapid transition into professional practice". The project aims to rapidly explore the lived experiences and coping strategies of early entrants during their entry to professional practice during COVID-19. The study will use online focus groups to determine potential intervention components, the acceptability of online group technologies and other forms of support for building resilience, health and wellbeing during this pandemic, and beyond. This study is vitally important in developing our understanding of the impact of the early deployment of healthcare students.

Everyone at RGU is immensely proud of our staff and students for bravely volunteering to support the emergency response at this challenging time. We know our students demonstrate professionalism, compassion and dedication and their contributions will be remembered long after this crisis is over.

As we enter August we begin our 20th week of remote working and during that period we've seen several course validations, we've managed the deployment of around 500 students onto paid placement in support of the NHS's response to the pandemic and we've managed to support all our students to complete their studies and assessments. This has been no mean achievement and credit to all academic and support staff for the efforts made during this time. The culmination of all the hard work over the last year has been the excellent National Student Survey (NSS) scores delivered by the school. I thank everyone, including our students, for the contributions to this outstanding success in delivering a third year of increase in student satisfaction to nearly 90%.

Change of Name for the School

Robert Gordon University is delighted to announce the change of name for the School of Nursing and Midwifery which, as of August 1st 2020, is now called the **School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice**. This is in recognition of the new BSc Paramedic Practice course which commences in September 2020 and we are delighted to welcome Paramedics to the family of professions within the school.



**SCHOOL OF NURSING, MIDWIFERY
AND PARAMEDIC PRACTICE 2020**

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Aberdeen Universities Preparing for the New Semester

As with all businesses, the universities in Scotland are working towards welcoming new and returning students to an altered environment in September. This has required a tremendous amount of work. The environment needs to be safe and follow government regulations and the curriculum has to be adapted to meet the educational standards of each programme of learning to ensure an excellent student experience. Craig Munro published an article in The Evening Times (July 22nd). He quoted a spokesperson for Robert Gordon University, who said: "We are taking a university-wide approach to the transition back onto campus, and we are working to ensure that all aspects of the institution are managed to make effective use of the space on campus with public health measures in place. Some staff have been provided controlled access to the campus from 6 July along with researchers carrying out externally funded laboratory, workshop or studio-based research. We are preparing to start the new semester with a blended delivery of safe on campus teaching and digital learning. This will mean that there will be digital delivery of lectures, tutorials, forums and class activities and we will be making the best use of our campus with appropriate measures in place. Our on-campus activities will follow government guidelines, including the use of our facilities for practical work in labs, studios or clinical teaching". Two examples of adaptations made at RGU are given below:

1. Simulation Students and Virtual Consultations

Dr Kate Goodhand is a lecturer at RGU and writes on the use of simulation to provide continuity of student nurse education during the pandemic:

Simulation, a technique used "to replace or amplify real experiences with guided experiences that evoke or replicate substantial aspects of the real world in a fully interactive manner" (Gaba 2007, p.126) is not a recent phenomenon, indeed, the Romans used simulation in 400BC when soldiers, using wooden beams, practiced sword play (Rhodes 2011). Today, the use of simulation in the world of healthcare and healthcare education has become increasingly widespread and with each technological development more complex. At Robert Gordon University, lecturers have access to a range of low to high fidelity simulators, including computerised mannequins that can simulate human physiology and provide realistic responses to care interventions.

The use of 'real' people playing the role of volunteer patients (VP) adds another dimension to simulation. The VP is provided with fictitious personal details and a scenario to play. In this way the student has access to a real person to practice their communication and interpersonal skills including history taking and assessment. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that face-to-face interactions between students, educators and our volunteer patients has been substantially reduced. However, this challenge is resulting in new ideas and initiatives.

At the start of the pandemic the Clinical Skills Manager distributed a questionnaire to our 130 volunteer patients to investigate if they would like to be involved with students using online formats and establish their access to computers or tablets. Thirty-five volunteers expressed a willingness to become involved and, over the summer, training has been delivered on the use of Microsoft Teams and Zoom (communication and collaboration platforms), and Panopto (a secure video platform). These technologies will facilitate students accessing our pretend patients enabling 'virtual consultations' and the continued development of the communication and interview skills required of our students in practice. It also enables our students to access to 'expert patients' - people who provide insight into what it is like living with a certain condition or healthcare experience, such as childbirth.

A recent initiative has provided a contemporary and authentic way for students to access volunteer patients. Lecturers from across the healthcare disciplines have worked in collaboration with NHS Grampian to introduce 'Near Me' (attendanywhere.com) to our suite of online technologies. Near Me is the video consulting service adopted by NHS Scotland that enables the public to have health and social care appointments from their homes, work or NHS clinics. Volunteer patients who have piloted the use of Near Me have found it easy to use, with clear and simple-to-follow instructions provided by the company. Providing access to the exact same technology used by our partners in practice will have huge benefits for our student population allowing students to be more prepared for the changes that have been implemented in practice, due to COVID-19, with the growth of virtual consultations. This will better prepare our students for placement and future practice! Fortunately, our simulated interactions will be excluded from the data collected by the NHS so will not influence their statistics in any way. Our experiences with Near Me will be evaluated next year and our results disseminated.

With thanks to all those who have made it happen: Carrie Heddle, Fiona Logie, Jon Reid, Fiona Roberts, Dr Fiona Work and all the volunteer patient group, and with special thanks to Rae and Miles.

Please feel free to contact Kate at k.goodhand@rgu.ac.uk, especially if you, or someone you know, would like to join the volunteer patient programme.

2. Alternative Online Assessments

Dr Fiona Work is a Teaching Excellence Fellow at RGU and writes about the adaptations she and her team made to the assessment process at RGU.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges to educators across Robert Gordon University (RGU) to "think differently" around how to best deliver scheduled summative assessments. The alternative assessment development work indicated that the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice (the School), had to alter the delivery of summative assessments overnight to be hosted on various online platforms.

Digital literacy is varied across our student population and using various digital platforms - such as Panopto apps, Surpass, BlackBoard Collaborate Ultra and Moodle Quiz - to host the online summative assessments was a steep learning curve for both the students and some School staff. However, the students were fantastic in adapting to the overnight changes, and all staff (academic, support and administration) embraced the challenge and were exceptionally creative in preparing the alternative online assessments.

Working closely with the Technology Enhanced Learning team within the School, the development work indicated that all assessments were undertaken as approved and students' educational journeys continued. Each alternative assessment was evaluated and, in an iterative fashion, the supportive assessment documentation was adjusted. Using such a co-production style, all student evaluation feedback was utilised to feed forward to the next alternative assessment.

Watching many students graduate this week in our virtual graduation ceremony demonstrated the positive commitment by all staff within the School and across RGU to support high quality teaching, learning and assessment despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Our recent positive National Student Survey results also reflect such a commitment.

With credit to everyone within the School (Technology Enhanced Learning team, students, administrative and academic staff) for making this happen.

Student Support

Financial Support

The RGU Student Hardship Appeal, which has so far raised £4,000 to support those in need of help during the coronavirus pandemic. Funds are being raised for students who are facing unforeseen financial challenges and are struggling to make ends meet as a result of the pandemic. Funds have already been allocated to attendees who are facing unforeseen financial challenges and are struggling to make ends meet as a result. However, the university has said as demand continues to increase, it is looking for the support of its community to ensure no student is left disadvantaged. Professor John Harper, principal and vice chancellor of RGU, said: "RGU has a tradition of welcoming individuals from all backgrounds and we are determined to continue to support talented students to achieve their ambitions through a university education. All funds raised will go directly to our most vulnerable students, those that have lost jobs, have no family support and are struggling to cover basic living costs." You can donate to the fund [here](#).

Bursaries for Nursing and Midwifery Students: [This booklet](#) describes the Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (NMSB) Scheme in Scotland, who is eligible for it, what it is (including current rates) and how you can apply for it. This booklet is for guidance only. It cannot cover all individual circumstances. The scheme is administered by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS).

Academic Support

The North of Scotland Centre for Applied Nursing Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research (NoSCAR) are running a series of seminars which may be of interest to any students, academic staff or clinical staff. These are drop in seminars via Microsoft Teams, so no need to book. The seminar topics, dates and times, and Teams links are listed below – all welcome.



Wednesday 16th September 13:00-14:00	Literature Searching	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Thursday 8th October 14:00-15:00	Critical Appraisal	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Tuesday 27th October 16:00-17:00	Research Funding — Where to Start	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Wednesday 18th November 13:00-14:00	Qualitative Research Methods	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Thursday 10th December 14:00-15:00	Understanding Statistics	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting

Masters and PhD Support Groups: Regardless of which university you are enrolled in, you are invited to join a small number of masters and PhD student groups. All meetings will take place via Microsoft Teams. These are informal meetings and have been set up by NoSCAR to provide a support network in NHSG and serve to create a local community of post-graduate students working in NHSG and studying at different universities in the UK. So, regardless of which university you are studying at, you are all very welcome to join the support groups on offer. Each session is facilitated by Professor Angela Kydd. The times, dates and Teams links are detailed below – no need to book, just drop in.

TIME	DAY AND DATE	PROGRAMME OF STUDY
12:00-13:00	Wednesday 22nd July (Join Microsoft Teams Meeting)	PhD students
16:00-17:00	Wednesday 22nd July (Join Microsoft Teams Meeting)	Masters students
12:00-13:00	Thursday 27th August (Join Microsoft Teams Meeting)	PhD students
16:00-17:00	Thursday 27th August (Join Microsoft Teams Meeting)	Masters students
12:00-13:00	Wednesday 28th October (Join Microsoft Teams Meeting)	PhD students
16:00-17:00	Wednesday 28th October (Join Microsoft Teams Meeting)	Masters students
12:00-13:00	Tuesday 15th December (Join Microsoft Teams Meeting)	PhD students
16:00-17:00	Tuesday 15th December (Join Microsoft Teams Meeting)	Masters students
To recommence at the end of January 2021		

Never Too Old to Learn

There has to be [good news](#)! For all those of you who are thinking about further education, take inspiration from Giuseppe Paterno. At the age of 96 he is Italy's oldest university graduate, completing a degree in History and Philosophy at the University of Palermo. He graduated first in his class with top honours.

Educational Resources

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) offers a new monthly programme of webinars and these commence this month, each focusing on a different bereavement-related topic. The sessions will be of relevance to a wide range of staff across health and social care in Scotland and will provide an opportunity to hear from a subject expert and also engage in Questions and Answer sessions. The sessions, dates and times are listed below. [Click here for more information and registration links](#).

- Death Certification in the time of COVID: Tuesday 18th August, 12:30-13:30
- Managing bereavement in the workplace: Tuesday 15th September, 17:00-18:00
- Supporting children who are bereaved during and after the COVID-19 pandemic: Tuesday 6th October, 12:30-13:30
- Dealing with bereavement as a health and social care worker in remote and rural communities: November, date TBC
- Bereavement following substance use: Tuesday 8th December, 12:30-13:30
- For other training materials, please visit the [Support Around Death website's COVID-19 pages](#).

The King's Fund: *Quality Improvement and Patient Empowerment: How Technology Can Facilitate a New Era of Care*. Using the orthopaedic pathway in Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust as a case study, the panel will explore in depth how the adoption and integration of technology can help NHS trusts deliver on elective surgeries that were postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. [Join this free online event](#) on **Wednesday 9th September 2020 (11:00-12:00)** to hear about:

- Concrete examples of how technology can optimise capacity and patient flow within care pathways, examining the outcomes for various aspects of the patient's journey.
- The role of tech solutions in transforming the day-to-day workload of clinicians, managers and front-line staff.
- How technology can be a catalyst for personalising care and improving patient experience.

Elsevier COVID-19 Healthcare Hub provides a free app on medical knowledge, sourced directly from professional tools like Clinical Key and Nursing Skills. The Elsevier Healthcare Hub provides evidence-based information to support clinicians every step of the way. Access concise evidence-based clinical overviews, skills and procedures to diagnose and treat the infection and patient education resources to help patients understand their diagnosis and how to manage their condition. It is an American site but has very useful and transferable resources. You can [sign up here](#) to receive a weekly digest of resources for researchers, publishers, editors, and students to learn and share their experiences in research and publishing.

Enago Academy is the knowledge arm of Enago and, as part of the Academy's knowledge-sharing initiatives, they offer [comprehensive and up-to-date resources](#). One link that some of you might find particularly helpful is [How to Write a Research Paper](#).

Scottish Government Digital Health and Care Directorate: Scotland's national decision support programme has been underway since April 2017. It is led by the Scottish Government Digital Health and Care Directorate, to deliver on a key objective within Scotland's Digital Health and Care Strategy to expand knowledge mobilisation and decision support tools and services for self-management, shared decisions, and frontline practice in health and social care. Programme management responsibility sits with the Digital Health and Care Institute. The programme is currently in research and innovation phase. It is building insights and defining direction of travel through iterative development and evaluation. [This short overview](#) shares key learning to date.

8th Right Decision Service COVID App: Working with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Knowledge Services, the Digital Health Institute has published an eighth COVID app, created with the [Right Decision Service](#) tools. The app is available on the [Apple](#) and [Google Play](#) stores. [Contact Ann Wales](#) to learn about delivering apps and websites for clinical guidelines and pathways.

Research Funding Opportunities

Digital Health Institute, General Funding Sources: The most up-to-date list of current funding sources can be found [on the DHI website](#).

Coronavirus Call to Action and Funding Updates: DHI have created [a project page on their website](#) to share the latest information in regard to their response to calls to action and potential funding opportunities for organisations with digital products, services and solutions.

NHS Grampian Endowment Fund: Calls come out in the autumn for clinical and academic staff to apply for funding for projects that are designed to have a positive impact on patient care. Funds of up to £12,000 will be awarded to successful applications. It is time to start thinking about putting ideas on paper and formulating a proposal. If you want to discuss a nursing project you can [contact Professor Angela Kydd](#), or if you want to discuss an Allied Health Profession project you can [contact Professor Kay Cooper](#).

Research Opportunity for Nurse-Led Proposals: ["COVID-19: Supporting Resilience in the Nursing Workforce" Grant Programme](#). The Burdett Trust is interested in receiving nurse-led proposals for evidence-based strategies and interventions which demonstrate innovative and sustainable changes to clinical practice and service redesign, as a result of learning gained through the pandemic. It also wishes to receive proposals aimed at tackling the mental health and well-being of nurses. The Trust recognises that nursing is part of a workforce team and evidence submitted as part of proposals should reference that. The Trust is keen to receive proposals that reflect a wide range of settings, in particular those that are out of hospital and which cover both prevention and care in both health and social care. The programme looks to recognise and support nurses in a "new normal" world, where our collective learning has led to real improvements for us all.

Projects must be nurse-led and have the nursing contribution to healthcare at their core. Proposals must be well-argued and demonstrate why the project is needed, what benefits and impacts it will deliver and how it will generate learning that can be shared, disseminated, and adopted more widely. Please note that this programme will not support personal study. Awards will be in the range of £20,000 to £100,000.

Note on eligibility: Grant applications are invited from charities, non-profit organisations and public bodies. The programme is not designed to support projects developed and undertaken by individuals and cannot award grants to private sector organisations. Applicants are strongly advised to apply well ahead of the deadline (midnight, 12 September 2020).

COVID-19 Library

Academic Reading

We have two recommendations for you to read. The first paper reports on a survey of UK academics about the experience of providing a university education during the pandemic:

- Watermeyer R, Crick T, Knight C, Goodall J. (2020) [Covid-19 and digital disruption in UK Universities: afflictions and affordances of emergency online migration](#). Higher Education, 4 June.

The second is an American paper which offers insights into nurses' current professional emergency preparedness competence, and suggests approaches to bridge gaps between competence, personal preparedness for a disaster, and likelihood to report to work in case of a disaster. The authors of the research pose three questions: What is the level of nurses' self-reported professional emergency preparedness competence? What is the relationship between nurses' personal preparedness and their likelihood to respond to a disaster? What is the relationship between nurses' professional emergency preparedness competence and their likelihood to respond to a disaster?

- McNeill C, Adams L, Heagele T, Swanson M, Alfred D. (2020) [Emergency Preparedness Competencies Among Nurses: Implications for Nurse Administrators](#).

Light Reading

There is much to learn from the past, and the paper we have selected compares the nursing shortage and measures to address it in the current pandemic, including the clinical placements offered to students, with the crisis faced by the country in World War Two. It points to raised awareness of mental health and the value of nursing itself, which echoes Ian's narrative about the roles of our students during this period:

- Rafferty AM, 2020. [Coronavirus, nursing and war: action that followed the national conflict can help guide the UK now](#). The Conversation, 24 June.

The Editorial Team

We are a small team from the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice at Robert Gordon University (RGU). Angela Kydd, Clinical Professor in Nursing RGU / NHSG (editor); Piotr Teodorowski, Research Assistant (deputy editor); Dr Zoi Papadatrou, Lecturer Adult Nursing; Maria Velo Higuera, Lecturer Midwifery; Colin MacLean, Librarian; Rahul Oza, Online Learning Developer.

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