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Working lives: Consequences of reforming pre-registration nurse education

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Topics investigated

1. Outcomes for MH and LD nursing from systems of pre-registration education different from that in the UK.

2. Potential effects on workforce profile and quality of care of an all-graduate nursing profession.

3. Factors likely to facilitate or constrain provision of mandatory preceptorship.

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Models of pre-registration nurse education

1. Specialist qualification after direct entry specialist course.
2. Specialist qualification after CFP and specialist branch course.
3. Generalist qualification after generic course with specialist options.
4. Generalist qualification after generic course without options.

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Generic education: problems for MH nursing

- Insufficient time for MH nursing practice and theory
- Problems providing all students with MH placements
- Employers perceive generic graduates as inadequately prepared
- Post-registration courses/support needed to develop basic MH competencies
- Increased recruitment and retention difficulties

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Generic education: current responses

- Little enthusiasm for returning to direct entry
- Allocating more time to MH in generic courses
- Developing post-registration MH courses/periods of supernumerary practice
- Including MH majors and branches in the course

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Educating MH nurses: implications for UK

- Changing from CFP plus branch model may challenge production of competent beginning practitioners in MH nursing
- Achieving consistency with nurse education elsewhere may not be best way of meeting UK MH needs.
- Current UK model may be best for modern day MH service delivery.

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Moving to an all-graduate workforce

- Longstanding advocacy of all graduate profession, not shared by all nurses.
- Issues: recruitment, retention, quality of care, parity with other health professionals, financing courses, and consistency with other countries.
- Most studies compare 4-year degrees with shorter non-degree courses.

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All-graduate profession: issues for workforce profile

Recruitment: Absolute numbers and profile of entrants

Challenge: Encouraging diversity of entrants

Pathways: Differing career aspirations, mixed evidence on retention,

non-graduates taking post-registration degrees

Challenge: Meeting aspirations of degree and non-degree nurses

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All-graduate profession: issues for quality of care

- Comparing competence of 3 and 4 year degree qualifiers with non-degree qualifiers

- Associations between proportion of degree nurses in workforce and patient outcomes

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Providing Preceptorship

- Importance of supporting NQNs
- Recommendations for mandatory preceptorship
- Aim to investigate existing schemes
- Questions: provision, effectiveness

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Providing preceptorship: key points

- Viewed positively when received
- Discrepancy between allocation and receipt
- Main deficit is clinical skill development
- Constraints of workloads and staffing
- Preceptors: preparation and benefits
- Benefits and risks of formalized programmes
- Competency assessment versus support

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Providing preceptorship: implications for UK

- Organizational commitment
- Appointing senior ‘preceptorship’ nurses
- Balance between: structure and flexibility
- Balance between: support and assessment

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