

Dr Phil Davies, Deputy Dean writes:-**INTRODUCTION TO LiTHE**

Over the last month you may have noticed a number of fresh faced second year medical students in and around the wards in Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. They have been undertaking their LiTHE unit (Learning in the Hospital Environment). This unit is designed as a transition between their pre-clinical and clinical years of the medical course at the University of Bristol. It aims to introduce them to ward based learning and develop them as self directed reflective learners. It places the patient and the clinical environment very much at the centre of their learning.

As well as spending time on the wards the students are encouraged to learn about the processes that make a hospital run effectively and efficiently. Many thanks to all the porters, receptionists, physiotherapists and multitude of other staff who let these students shadow them to gain a better insight of the hospital at work.

As part of the LiTHE, all the students undertook a small project which they presented on the last day of their unit. A summary of their projects is given below.

[How do hospital meals contribute to patient wellbeing?](#)

Students surveyed patients and dieticians to assess their attitudes towards hospital meals. The patients surveyed generally enjoyed the meals they were served and felt that they were appetising. The dieticians survey stated that they were not consulted about meal plans but were hoping to do so in the future. Improvements in nutrition suggested by these groups included increased week to week variation, especially important for long stay patients who suffer from menu fatigue, increased availability of healthy snacks between meals to help with those with smaller suppressed appetites and easier to understand menus.

[Could Medical Students play a more active role in the Hospital Environment?](#)

Students surveyed a variety of health professionals and students about their attitudes towards medical students on the wards. All those surveyed felt students should take a more active role in patient care from the time they start on the wards. They felt that this would help them focus on patient centred care and improve their communication skills and professionalism and give them more insight into patient safety, which would hopefully decrease medical errors in the future. Patients felt that medical students are of particular value as they can spend longer with them and potentially give greater attention to detail about patient problems. The limitations to students being more actively involved were thought to be personal confidence, time needed for supervision and the fast paced environment of many of our acute wards.

**DATES FOR YOUR
DIARY:-**

**Tuesday 15th December
from 12.30pm @
Redwood Education
Centre – Annual
Educational Leads Study
Afternoon for Unit
Coordinators, Unit Tutors
& Element Leads**

USEFUL LINKS:-

Gloucestershire Academy
Website – [Click Here](#)

Gloucestershire Academy
Contacts – [Click Here](#)

[Barriers to Learning and Progressing in Clinical Medicine](#)

All the current students were surveyed and were asked what they thought the main barriers to their learning were in the clinical environment. The majority of students felt that the transition from the pre-clinical to clinical part of the course was difficult. Major barriers to this transition were identified as a perceived lack of confidence in the clinical environment, attitudes of medical and nursing staff towards junior medical students and the students feeling that they were getting in the way or not being welcomed onto the wards.

[Medical Student - Help or Hindrance?](#)

This literature review looked at the evidence as to whether medical students are viewed as a help or a hindrance by patients and staff whilst they are in a clinical setting. Evidence suggests that medical students have a valuable role in promoting patient safety, patient morale and building rapport between patients and other healthcare professionals. The main negative impact of medical students in a clinical environment seems to be staff perception that they are time consuming and can get in the way.

[Food for Thought - The Impact of Food on Inpatients in Hospital](#)

A literature review and informal discussions with patients looking at the impact of food on patient wellbeing and recovery from illness. The conclusions of this study are that nutrition is an important aspect of patient care. More time should be taken to involve patients. Specific nutritional menus may be of value in different ward settings. "The provision of food suitable for the sick is not just a hotel function, it is a treatment".

[How do Different Aspects of the Ward Influence the Patient?](#)

This review looked at the important influence that the environment has on patient wellbeing. It brought in aspects such as choice of side room or ward bay, interaction with other groups including professionals, other patients and visitors, information given, atmosphere on the ward and availability of entertainment are all important in patient wellbeing and quicker recovery from illness.

[Patient Attitudes Towards Participating in Hospital Teaching](#)

Informal discussions were held with a number of patients. Overall patients in Gloucestershire Royal Hospital were comfortable about having medical students on the ward. Main concerns were of fatigue from repeated examination, concerns for inexperienced practitioners undertaking (intimate) examinations and investigations and the potential effect of students involvement slowing down clinical care.

["As per Trust guidelines"](#)

All second year medical students were surveyed about their knowledge of content and access to guidelines. Pre-clinical students making the transition into clinical medicine were generally unaware of the nature or availability of local, regional or national guidelines. It is recommended that medical students need more education to the use of guidelines in patient care.

Congratulations to all the students for completing these projects in such a short time frame. Although the sample sizes were generally small, they give an excellent insight into how our hospital runs and how medical students can have a very positive impact on patient care.

All the LiTHE students will return to the Academy in September to continue their clinical training.

