

What educators want: Genetics and the nursing professions

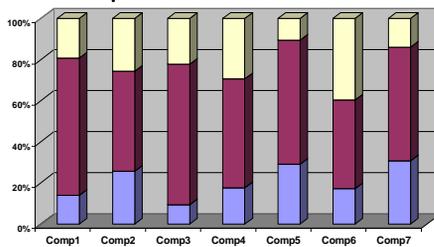
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Background The NHS National Genetics Education and Development Centre has used the seven core competences in genetics (Kirk M *et al.* 2003) developed for nurses, midwives and health visitors to explore the current educational provision and future training needs of the nursing professions within the UK.

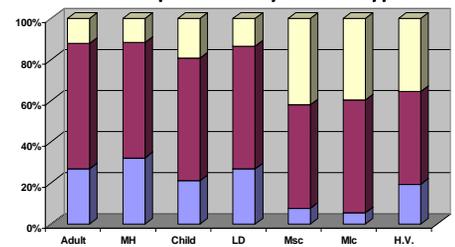
Needs analysis UK higher education establishments teaching pre-registration nurse, midwifery or health visitor courses were invited to complete a questionnaire focusing on genetics training (n=83; response rate 51%). The graphs below summarise educators' views on how prepared their students are to meet the requirements of each of the seven core competences in genetics (Fig. 1 & 2); their preferences for formats of educational resources (Table 1) and their needs (Table 2).

Fig. 1. Achievement of each competence across all the courses



Students **fully demonstrate** competence
 Students achieve to a **limited** extent
 Students are **not equipped** in this competence
Course:
Adult
Child
Msc - Midwifery short course (for qualified nurses)
MH - Mental Health
LD - Learning Difficulties
Mlc - Midwifery long course (direct entry)
HV - Health Visitor

Fig. 2. Achievement of all 7 competences by course type



Core Competences in Genetics

1. Identify clients who might benefit from genetic services and information.
2. Appreciate the importance and sensitivity in tailoring genetic information and services to clients' culture, knowledge and language level.
3. Uphold the rights of all clients to informed decision making and voluntary action.
4. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the role of genetic and other factors in maintaining health...to underpin effective practice.
5. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the utility and limitations of genetic testing and information.
6. Recognise the limitations of one's own genetic expertise.
7. Obtain and communicate credible, current information about genetics, for self, clients and colleagues.

Table 1. Ranked preferences for resources

1-10 = Frequency of use and 1-10 = Usefulness of resource where 1=most, 10=least

1	Text based	5
2	Web sites	3
3	Case studies	2
4	Access to service users	1
5	Videos	6
6	Skills sessions	4
7	Attachment to genetics service	8
8	Test banks	9
9	Educators' workshops	7
10	Audio	10

Table 2. Areas needing support

See quotes from educators (panel below)

Ranked in order where 1=theme most mentioned

- 1 Access to professionals
- 2 More time within the curriculum
- 3 Explicit demonstration of content and relevance
- 4 Training for educators
- 5 Opportunities for genetics placements
- 6 Access to users
- 7 Guidance on levels of competence

Summary

- Responses rate by course type was between 35-50%.
- Inclusion of genetics is high (89-100%) with 26-31% assessing the genetics taught.
- Genetics education varies both in terms of achievement of the individual competence statements (Fig. 1) and achievement of the whole framework by individual professional programmes (Fig. 2).
- Comp. 5 is achieved least well and Comp. 6 most well (Fig.1).
- Overall, midwifery programmes indicate that the competences are covered more within their curricula than other courses (Fig. 2).
- Resource development opportunities are highlighted, as the most useful resource formats for teaching are not always the most frequently used (Table 1).

The Centre's role - the educators' perspective

Access to specialists: *Increased collaborative working with genetic specialists to ensure the curriculum reflects current developments in genetics and healthcare practice. (CD62)*

Training: *In the absence of staff educated around the competency areas it will be difficult to provide a holistic education in relation to genetics...The risk is that the focus will remain on the biological aspects. (CD84)*

Placement opportunities: *Mapping of clinical placements to identify where students can see the integration of theory and practice so that genetics education is applied to the practice setting. (CD62)*

Raising awareness: *It may be difficult to make progress unless the competencies are in the learning outcomes of each programme and would then be built into the assessment. The involvement of the Professional bodies would certainly be very helpful. (CD19)*

Taking it forward This study has provided a voice for UK educators teaching the nursing professions. The findings support the Centre's work strategy (its role in raising awareness with stakeholders and professional bodies; the development of 'training the trainers' events and the production of educational resource packages to support teaching and learning in genetics) and provides specific direction for a number of key areas.