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InnoHealth – healthcare educators on a working life period

Topic: Ethical and practical concerns within nursing and healthcare teaching

Background: Nowadays healthcare education should respond to the demands of the continuously changing working life. In the InnoHealth project (ESF funded RDI project 2012–2014), the main four cornerstones of the development of health care were 1) multiprofessional collaboration, 2) health informatics, 3) development of education and 4) practice. The project implementation included 1) 1–2 months' working life periods for lecturers, 2) short updating education periods for working life partners and 3) workshops and student projects. In all, 11 health care lecturers and 10 engineering lecturers were involved in the project. The practice placements were situated in South-West Finland and were chosen according to the lecturers' personal interests.

Aim: The aim of the project was to develop education by improving multiprofessional collaboration, utilising health informatics and to support health care personnel to meet the challenges of working life, for example in health promotion, patient safety, patient orientation and supported self-care.

Results: After the working life period, each health care lecturer (n=11) wrote a report and described the benefits the period had brought him/her. The length of the reports varied from two to 14 pages including figures and tables. The analysis was performed by content analysis. The main results are grouped into four cornerstones as follows:

- Multiprofessional collaboration: new possibilities to network and collaborate, meeting experts from different practice areas.
- Health informatics: the use of health informatics in education, updating the teacher's own competence to use technology (e.g. medical devices, health care programmes and software).
- Development of education: updating the teacher's own clinical competence, getting new contents to the course plan, getting authentic patient cases to the education, getting a better idea of the correct and adequate competences in education.
- Practice: Focusing healthcare education on the demands of working life, helping the transition between education and clinical practice, identifying the needs of continuous education, concrete collaboration with clinical practice e.g. in student projects, multiprofessional collaboration in clinical practice with students.

In general, all lecturers were very satisfied with their working life periods and wished them to be a constant procedure. Knowledge of working life and clinical practice are essential parts of health care lecturers' competence.

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