The importance of a well-educated, caring and compassionate healthcare workforce was reiterated in the Francis Report, commissioned in the wake of failures at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. The report recommended that healthcare professionals be encouraged to develop basic care skills with staff required to record their annual learning and its implementation in practice\(^1\). The need to refocus on the 6Cs of nursing was also emphasised.

Yet in an ever changing landscape that can be both target and cost driven, striving to achieve a well educated, compassionate workforce that delivers high-quality care can be challenging.

**Background**

The importance of a well-educated, caring and compassionate healthcare workforce was reiterated in the Francis Report, commissioned in the wake of failures at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. The report recommended that healthcare professionals be encouraged to develop basic care skills with staff required to record their annual learning and its implementation in practice\(^1\). The need to refocus on the 6Cs of nursing was also emphasised.

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**Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**

Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, one of the first NHS Foundation Trusts in England, has a reputation for high standards in education, learning and development. Homerton’s aim is to create the right systems, processes and learning opportunities to develop a culture where learning and development is accessed by all and seen as an important component of people and organisational development.

**Elsevier Clinical Skills**

Homerton has chosen to invest in Elsevier Clinical Skills, an interactive evidence based online training solution, to help deliver, manage and measure its clinical procedures training. Homerton will roll out the use of the product to a range of users including nurses, healthcare assistants, medical and nursing students and doctors in training, with the objectives of further developing their education landscape, enhancing patient safety and improving service quality.

This case study looks at the original challenges faced by Homerton in its provision of clinical skills training; the chosen solution and its deployment.


www.elsevierclinicalskills.co.uk
The challenge

Homerton recognised and acknowledged through a needs analysis the demand for clinical skills teaching and an ongoing need for assessment of competency. This is in line with the Foundation School’s requirement for specific clinical skills teaching and assessment for Foundation Year 1+2 doctors dating from August 2009.

• Subsequently all healthcare professionals require regular clinical skills teaching in order to maintain their competence at a safe level. These staff include: doctors, nurses, midwives, healthcare assistants, allied health professionals, students and any staff in regular contact with patients.
• Homerton currently employs in excess of 3000 staff based both in the hospital and the community covering one hospital and approximately 30 community sites. They also supervise up to 600 medical students, 70+ student nurses, 50+ student midwives and 30+ allied health professional students during the course of a year.

Homerton’s challenge is to meet training targets set internally, in line with those stipulated by the varying regulators such as the Care Quality Commission, in a manner that is effective whilst cost efficient without clinical staff spending too much time away from patients and their significant others.

Like most NHS trusts, Homerton experiences limited time to release staff from the wards and into training due to economic, regulatory and operational procedures. Whilst offering extremely high standards of education, there remains an overreliance on resource heavy training methods, spread across multiple Trust locations. Support resources are frequently print based or if online, poor usability means high cost per use.

Stakeholder Focus:

Val Dimmock MA(Ed) RN, Simulation and Clinical Skills Facilitator at Homerton

Val has been instrumental to the adoption of *Elsevier Clinical Skills*.

> I felt *Elsevier Clinical Skills* was a really important initiative and was pleased to be involved with *Elsevier* at Beta development stage. The e-learning programme enables staff to maintain their competencies, keep updated and plan specific individual learning, as well as allow managers to set tasks for their staff in order to manage appraisals and performance reviews. It will improve our efficiencies both financially and in terms of staff productivity. Strategically it supports our objectives of quality service provision alongside continuous staff and organisational development.

Val Dimmock, Simulation and Clinical Skills Facilitator

Val is a registered nurse by background, specialising in A&E and critical care, ITU and cardiothoracic nursing. She has a degree in Education and has taught medical and nursing students at several universities.

Val joined Homerton in 2008 tasked with the project of establishing a Trust-level simulation and clinical skills training programme. Her major achievements include:

• The transformation of what were Homerton’s existing facilities (two classrooms) into a modern Education centre, including simulation suite, debrief area and purpose built clinical skills communication facility
• Expansion of a clinical skills and simulation team to include Medical Education Clinical Fellow and two Emergency Department doctors working two days a week in the Simulation Centre
• Instigation and co-ordination of a now annual Simulation and Clinical Skills conference attracting international speakers and delegates

Val believes that investment in *Elsevier Clinical Skills* is integral to the Trust’s aim to improve patient safety and service quality.
The solution

*Elsevier Clinical Skills* is a comprehensive, evidence based online skills tool that can be customised to meet local protocols. It sits within a Learning Management System and covers approximately 150 skills each written by leading academics and nursing professionals. The range of skills cover both practical and communication skills necessary for high quality patient care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Each skill includes:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Short skill summary with learning objectives</td>
<td>• Skill overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Competency checklist</td>
<td>• References and additional resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• List of equipment needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstration video or animation</td>
<td>Once a skill is completed students and staff must then have their competency assessed and signed off in practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-test option</td>
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Val Dimmock feels the online learning solution will meet the Trust’s objectives by managing training delivery, outcome evaluation and compliance in a single solution.

- **Allows staff and students full access to online clinical skills learning**
  The tool can be accessed on and offline across multiple sites and by devices such as tablets and phones as well as conventional PCs, enabling users to make effective use of their time and offering a solution to training needs that will not rely on individuals taking time out from clinical practice.

- **Allows competencies and learning to be recorded at individual and group level**
  Each skill prepares staff for the assessment of a particular competency with functionality that allows the individual to record their practical learning. Trainers will also be able to track usage and task completion for audit purposes.

- **Supports staff development**
  Allowing managers at ward level to set specific tasks relevant to their staff, and utilise the product to manage staff appraisals and performance reviews.

- **Facilitates workforce planning**
  Offering the capability of exporting data, which will be useful in workforce planning, helping to plan the skills mix and pinpoint areas for improvement.

Key stakeholders at Homerton felt *Elsevier Clinical Skills* differentiated itself from competing solutions through its use of visual, multi-media learning, the quality of the content and the usability of the platform. Another major benefit was the ability to customise content and upload new skills if required.

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“*The ability to customise the product means it can be extended for use beyond standard user groups through the upload of new skills. It also allows nurse managers and higher education trainers to tailor content around specific training goals, for example, in line with a pre-registration nursing course, staff and organisational needs such as CQUIN targets or local Trust policies.*”

Val Dimmock:
Product in use

In a day-to-day context, Homerton believes Elsevier Clinical Skills will offer repeated value in helping to support face-to-face training of fundamental skill procedures.

Example: IV Cannulation

The current method requires one full day face-to-face and simulation based training. Now, as part of the pre-course training:

• The Elsevier Clinical Skills learning module, including overview, equipment listing and videos, will be set as a task for the learner group

• A self-test will be undertaken and brought to the training session

• Competency checklist will be completed during observation and recorded

The result will be one day’s training reduced to a half, **reducing the need for clinical staff to be out of clinical areas.** Post-course learners will have constant access to Elsevier Clinical Skills and the relevant module for reference. The Clinical Skills trainer will have more time to be deployed in supervision and follow-up.

Beyond its use as a learning tool, it is believed Elsevier Clinical Skills will help improve Clinical Governance.

Example: Serious untoward incident (SUI)

If the failing is focused around a clinical skill, one recommendation may be the roll out of a hospital-wide education program.

Elsevier Clinical Skills will find value in the ability to:

• Allow the skill to be sat within a learning management system where the skill or skills can be assigned to one or multiple learners

• Access an integrated communication by emailing the skill module to the complete clinical staff base with deadline for completion

• Monitor staff engagement & interaction with the skill or skills

• Hold a completed record of the skill / skills being successfully completed with soft intelligence from both the learner and their mentor / supervisor. This intelligence can easily be held within the product or exported to other systems for internal & external inspection

• Customise skills in line with new Trust recommendations if required

The learning management functionality will also assist with **internal and external compliance issues as recommended by the CQC.**
Response to product at trial stage

The product was trialed by Homerton between May 2013 – July 2013 with three groups:

- Year 3 medical students – 56 students
- Final year nursing students – 12 students
- Preceptorship staff nurses – 16 staff nurses

The library manager, simulation and clinical skills facilitator and two nurse educators supported the programme at instructor level and administrative level. The administrative level allowed Homerton to make changes and adapt skills to local learning needs.

The product evaluated extremely well across all user groups.

Nursing Students found the product ‘useful’ and ‘beneficial in preparing for OSCE’s and improving knowledge’.

Preceptor Staff Nurses felt the content was ‘well explained and straight forward’ with a ‘very good self-assessment option to test knowledge’.

The majority of medical students that used the product found the quality of content to be very high and the features such as its intuitive interface, self-test option, print functionality and multi-media presentations were felt to be ‘extremely useful’.

Support from key stakeholders

Consultant Physician, CMT Training Director:
“I think it is excellent and it would be really helpful if it could be extended to post-graduate trainees. In particular I can see clear relevance for the CMT programme. The online clinical skills learning tool would be of great value in terms of both education and governance. It will strengthen our reputation of excellence as a training organisation with obvious benefits.”

Consultant Respiratory Physician:
“Excellent tool to help students prepare for their OSCE’s.”

Professional Development Sister:
“Having worked 1:1 with all nursing staff on ACU for the last 6 months, I think this system could be invaluable in helping staff to achieve their potential and as a result improve patient care.

In addition, I think it would also be beneficial when staff (or their supervisor/mentor) identify a learning need and require quick access to information to learn this skill. This could also complement any competencies that have been written as a means to support learning and assessment.”

Consultant Nurse:
“I can see it being beneficial for so many areas but from a personal level invaluable with regards to medication safety. I would love to set up a section also for non-medical prescribing. I certainly support the application for this product.”

Practice Development Lead ITU:
“I feel it will be of great benefit to a wide range of health care professionals – it is very exciting.”

Resuscitation Officer:
“I cannot stress strongly enough how important this initiative is. It has potential in so many different arenas.”
Conclusions

Homerton expects the deployment of Elsevier Clinical Skills will result in improved practical education which will produce a workforce confident in its clinical ability.

Healthcare professionals benefiting from the product include:

- All healthcare professionals across bands 1-8, including nurses, midwives, allied health professionals and medical trainees, healthcare students, qualified staff and health care assistants
- Medical students and all trainees at F1-ST level
- Consultant staff throughout all specialties
- The local healthcare community and wider health economy
- Medical Students

Return on investment will be monitored over the next 3-5 years but with significant return expected as a result of:

1. Reduced number of face-to-face training hours per individual
2. Improved productivity of learners once on the ward resulting in the delivery of high quality evidenced-based patient care
3. Improved productivity of trainers (with expertise utilised in supervision and follow-up)
4. Contribution to compliance and CQC requirements for both soft and hard intelligence / data

Training coordinators and managers will be able to set and track skills performance criteria against patient outcomes helping Homerton meet CQUIN targets and improve patient reported outcome measures.

“Elsevier Clinical Skills will not only ensure consistent high levels of care throughout our services but also provide transparent, demonstrable data available to both internal and external regulators, addressing issues within the Francis Report.”

Further information

Val Dimmock
Simulation and Clinical Skills Facilitator
Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Tel: 0208 510 5758/5969
Email: Valerie.Dimmock@homerton.nhs.uk

Joanna Grajewski
Sales Manager – Elsevier Clinical Skills
Mobile: 07826 530 928
Email: j.grajewski@elsevier.com

www.elsevierclinicalskills.co.uk