

# COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

**Improving Management and Leadership Skills in Undergraduate Medicine  
Clinical Quality Improvement Assignment in the Third Year**

## Course Directors

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## **Introduction**

As a medical student, you should be preparing for life as a doctor, no matter which path you take later on in life. Whichever direction your future career takes you, there will be a need to engage with the managerial side of healthcare services, to provide the very best care to your patients. You should be thinking about how the organization of healthcare affects the quality of care of your patients, and more than this, how you as an individual and leader can improve the service and the experience or outcomes of those you take care of.

The aim of this assignment is to incorporate elements of 'management' teaching into the curriculum in a structured way so that students at ICMS understand the vital importance of clinicians leading change in health services and are able to engage early on in quality improvement initiatives.

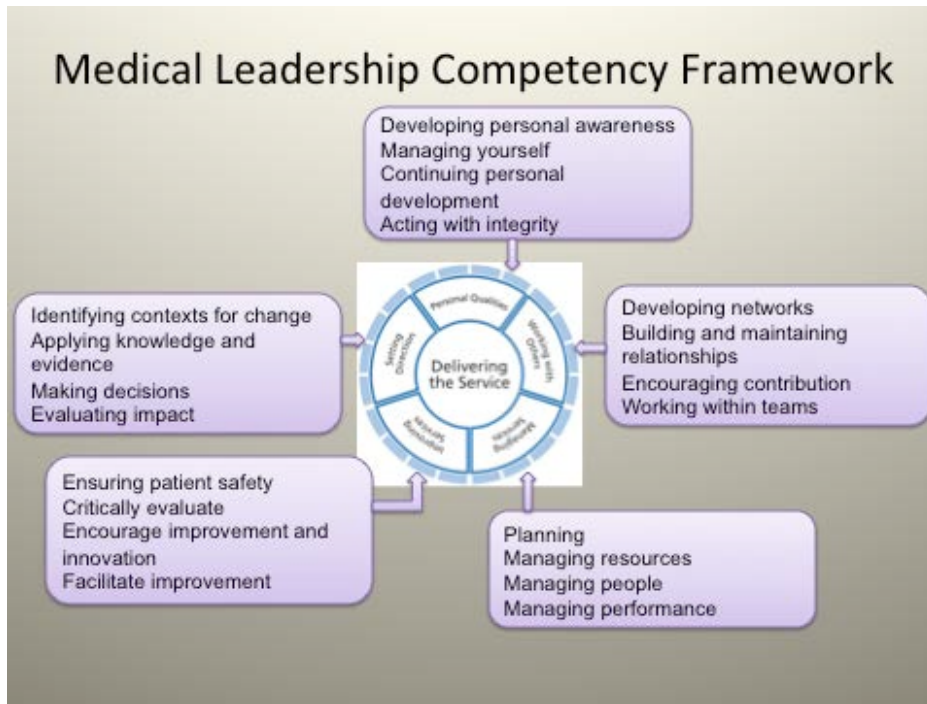
This assignment will go some way to delivering the undergraduate training requirements of the GMC [1] and supporting the vision recently published by the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges, detailed in the Medical Leadership Competency Framework [Reference 2 and Figure 1].

The assignment takes the form of a group work project with assessment in year 3. You will work in your clinical groups to study the clinical environment that you are working, identify specific areas for quality improvement, in terms of effectiveness of the system, patient safety or patient satisfaction and subsequently design improvement strategies, presented at the end of the firm, in the form of a poster presentation.

This process can teach much of the knowledge, skills and attitudes documented in the AoRMC document, delivered and assessed using many of the teaching styles and assessment tools they recommend. (Figure 1)

Figure 1.

Knowledge and Skills detailed in the Medical Leadership Competency Framework.



### Learning Outcomes

At the end of this assignment you should:

- Understand the principles of what constitutes quality of care
- Understand how this is vitally important to the NHS currently and in the future
- Be familiar with simple methods to evaluate a service, including audit
- Understand the importance of clinicians leading change in health services
- Understand the process of development of quality improvement initiatives
- Have an opportunity to work as a team, building on team-working and leadership skills taught in the PBL and PPD course

## **Project outline:**

### **28<sup>th</sup> November 2011 - Project introduction:**

Introduction to the project during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year “Introduction to Clinical Specialties Course”. This will include:

- Overview of the NHS structure and workings of organisations
- Quality improvement strategies, including audit and service evaluation
- An introduction to how the project will work
- Time set aside to develop ideas and set roles within the teams, with advice from course leads.

### **Within the second 10-week attachment placement in year 3:**

Project identification - Within the first few weeks of the second medical attachment groups should work during an initial period to evaluate the service provided by the medical firms or involving allied services and scope potential projects.

Evaluation of service – Once a deficiency in the service provided is identified a simple but effective evaluation strategy must be planned and carried out. This may take the form of a short audit, or use existing healthcare data to show a deficiency or gap in the service.

Service improvement strategies should then be sought. It may be helpful to map out pathways of care that are already in place to identify which interventions will be most useful and most feasible.

There may be a formal meeting with tutors at each site to further develop ideas in the form of a work shop or open house part way through this assignment to help steer your project work and smooth troubled group dynamics – check with the teaching coordinators.

Poster design: The group should then create a poster for display as the basis for discussion of their findings and ideas, drawing on NHS management concepts in the process

A period will be set aside at each site for poster presentations by groups and the discussion, ideally with senior management representative(s) as well as clinical/academic supervisors.

## **Poster Design**

A poster presentation that details the deficiencies identified, and proof that this is the case, and a strong proposal to improve the quality of care that is being delivered.

The poster format should describe your work, addressing the following:

- Identification of a deficiency in service quality
- Evaluation of the problem
- Development of an effective improvement strategy and how this may take place
- Reasons for choosing this method as opposed to other methods

The posters will be assessed on the strength of a proposal to make a locally relevant, important and feasible impact on service quality in terms of effectiveness, patient safety or patient experience.

The improvement strategies must be feasible and cost-effective, a multimillion pound redesign of the ward for example is not practical and unlikely to happen.

## **Guidance on suitable projects**

Keep it simple – The best improvements are a reaction to a simple but real problem. The outcome from this project must be achievable.

Remember that quality of care is a term used to describe the quality of the entirety of care delivered to patients, which includes the following:

- **Patient safety:** This means ensuring the environment is safe and clean, reducing avoidable harm such as excessive drug errors, accidents or rates of healthcare associated infections.
- **Patient experience:** The compassion, dignity and respect with which patients are treated. It can only be improved by analysing and understanding patient satisfaction with their own experiences.
- **Effectiveness of care.** This means understanding success rates from different treatments for different conditions as well as the efficiency of the service delivered

Identification of deficiencies in any of the above domains will be a suitable topic for this assignment. Identification of a safety issue on the ward such as doctors having to walk excess distances carrying sharps, targeting a poor patient satisfaction issue because of doctors not recognising the need for patients to ask questions in private or studying the time it takes for urgent urine samples to reach the laboratory all would be suitable quality issues that need addressing. Pick a defined subject that is not too broad, for instance, don't try to evaluate and change the 18-week

waiting times for surgery that involve GP, outpatient and surgical services and have many influences – picking one stage of a pathway of care in this instance may however be suitable.

Plan how you will evaluate this perceived deficiency in the service. You could audit the times taken for the bloods to reach the lab to see where the biggest delays are; perform a simple survey of staff on the wards or collate all the information that is known about patient satisfaction on the ward to prove a deficiency in the service.

Design a strategy for improving the deficiency in quality that you have identified and evaluated. Remember to keep this feasible and effective. Examples that may improve the above problems would be relocation of sharps boxes, raising awareness of a need for patients to ask questions in private in certain situations or a suggestion for a different pick-up point for urgent bloods to be taken to the laboratory.

You do not have to carry out these improvement projects but run through your ideas with staff on the ward to see how feasible the ward staff think the strategy is. A project with real merit will often be carried out by enthusiastic staff on the ward, especially if they were involved in the generation of ideas.

### **Student study groups**

You will work in your pre-organised clinical groups on each firm.

### **Help and advice**

A named teaching coordinator or teaching fellow at each site will oversee this assignment and be able to advise each group. In addition to this there are a number of sources of advice and help that may be useful within each clinical team:

- The medical and surgical staff – The doctors you are working with will all be familiar with audit and improvement of quality, having worked in the NHS for a period. They will also have an in depth insight into the workings of the hospital and which parts of the service provided to their patients are deficient
- Nursing staff – The lead nurses on the ward have a unique insight into the opinions of patients and how patient care is delivered within a particular area.
- Allied health care professionals – Remember that much of the work and contact time with patients is actually from occupational therapists, physiotherapists etc, and it may be that there are great opportunities to improve the overall care a patient receives by working in close partnership with these teams.
- Management staff – Drawing on the expertise of Medical managers may be vital in this project and this group of professionals may be able to provide some data on the efficiency of a service.

- The quality improvement team at each site – Many sites have Clinical Quality Improvement teams that are able to provide useful advice on the specific problems within each trust and potential methods for improvement.

We would encourage you to contact as many of these people as possible. It goes without saying that all these groups of people have busy schedules and limited time, be courteous and polite but above all enthusiastic and your ideas will be very well received by the staff. If you are having problems engaging staff during your placement your tutors should be able to help, and there will be support from various others at each site who will make themselves known to you.

### **Student study time**

This is a group project. You should divide the tasks out equally through the group and develop a simple effective plan to complete this assignment. Remember that the most effective service evaluation strategies are simple in their design.

We would expect a maximum of 4 hours to be spent by *each student in a group* to complete this assignment and approximately 2 hours of each team members time to attend a poster presentation session.

### **References**

[1] Tomorrow's doctors GMC 2009

[2] Guidance for Undergraduate Medical Education: Integrating the Medical Leadership Competency Framework Academy of Royal Medical Colleges 2010