Abstract

Background

The Independent Cancer Task force (2015) estimate that every two minutes someone in England will be informed they have cancer and that half the population born since 1960 will have a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. With this increasing incidence of cancer and the wider availability of treatment options, a significant proportion of acute admissions to hospitals are accounted for by cancer patients. The aim of Acute Oncology (AO) is to provide specialist advice to improve the care and length of stay for acutely unwell cancer patients in alignment with national standards. Consequently, the management of these acutely unwell patients requires both a multidisciplinary and evidence based approach. In turn effective delivery of healthcare learning for clinicians needs to be up to date and flexible in order to meet the needs of the individual, their patients and a constantly evolving National Health Service (NHS).

Materials and Methods

A multidisciplinary specialist group consisting of clinical stakeholders from the North West of England and educationalists from The University of Liverpool (UoL) developed an online 15 credit, Masters level acute clinical oncology module. The focus was directed towards the development of AO clinical practitioners through the use of a social constructivist (Morris 2003) and student-centred (Cotton 2005) paradigm. The delivery method of the module allowed for asynchronous access to learning materials to align with the demands of clinical job roles and personal commitments. Emphasis was placed upon the development of learning materials which were inter-professional, evidence based, patient centred and ‘fit for purpose’. The module consisted of online lectures, discussion boards, quizzes, supporting articles and key documents. Salmon’s “5-Stage Model” was used to introduce the acute oncology E-learning materials to avoid overwhelming learners. Additionally learners were encouraged to reflect critically on their professional development throughout the duration of the module utilising Schon’s “Reflective Practitioner Model” (1991).

Results

The module is currently commencing its 5th iteration. Thematic analysis of the discussion fora and module evaluations indicate that the resources meet the learning needs of clinicians. Comments from learners identify that they feel better informed in regards to their daily clinical practice and that knowledge gained from the module has helped develop their local AO service.

*“The module encouraged me to reflect on different aspects of my role and potential areas of development for me personally as well as for the service.” Anonymous Online Acute Oncology Student UoL 2015*

Conclusion

To date, module evaluations and thematic analysis of data indicates a positive impact on the individual learner, their local AO service and ultimately patient care.