The role of the Associate Practitioner in Critical Care at UHS and their impact on the Workforce and the Patient

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Introduction

UHS General Intensive Care unit has always been innovative with ways of working which has proved vitally important over recent years due to national reduction in numbers of registered nurses and the changes in educational routes into nursing.

Qualification

The Associate Practitioner role has developed alongside the educational qualification changes over the last 10 years going from NVQ level 3 senior healthcare assistants and evolving into a foundation degree trained associate practitioner. At UHS the training programme included a 6-month supernumerary period with an extensive competency document with bolt on courses as required.

The Role

The role of the Associate Practitioner in UHS Critical Care sees them working within their competence alongside the registered nursing team under supervision; caring for patients with long term ventilation and rehabilitation needs, facilitating care with the multi professional team and ensuring fundamental and essential care is delivered and acting as the patient advocate at all times.

Feedback and Follow-up

‘They are the heart of the ICU’

‘You’ve made me feel human again’

‘They show real compassion for the person in the bed and their relatives’

‘They really provide the time, empathy and compassion that is needed during rehabilitation after a critical illness’

‘The contribution this team has brought to GICU at UHS has been inspiring and invaluable - a wonderful source of energy, enthusiasm and great care for colleagues, patients and relatives which is clearly demonstrated by the feedback we receive.’

Conclusions & Key Points

The Associate Practitioner at UHS was originally developed to support individual personal development needs and provide educational opportunities, it was soon realized the incredible impact these individuals could have on the care needs of long term critically ill patients and their families.

This fresh thinking approach has also enabled us to provide the unit with a further team of competent staff to look after level 2 and 3 patients alongside the registered nurses to complement our trained staff recruitment process.