Empowering junior doctors to lead service improvement projects in Western Australian hospitals

The Medical Service Improvement Program

Introduction

The Medical Service Improvement Program provides junior doctors with the opportunity to develop leadership and service improvement skills and is an initiative of the Western Australian public healthcare system. The program allows participating junior doctors to undertake a service improvement project that will help improve patient care and help them to develop skills in project management and leadership.

Service improvement training and leadership development opportunities

To equip them with the skills necessary to lead their projects, participants in each rotation receive training in service improvement methodologies, specifically Clinical Service Improvement (CSI). The training also incorporates elements of project management and change management.

Service improvement project outcomes

To date, 62 improvement projects undertaken as part of the Medical Service Improvement Program have had a significant impact on patient care and have helped to improve the efficiency of hospital services.

Program objectives

1. To engage junior medical staff in clinical improvement and service improvement within hospitals
2. To empower junior medical staff to identify elements of their workflow that impact their ability to focus on patient care and improve care delivery
3. To develop a network of clinicians with formal proficiency in service improvement and clinical improvement
4. To build strong connections and appropriate communication channels between hospital management and junior medical staff
5. To create a means for these clinicians to identify and work together to address issues across the hospital
6. To increase the leadership capacity and capability of junior medical staff

The Medical Service Improvement Program

Week 1: Introduction

The program offers participating junior doctors the opportunity to undertake a service improvement project. During a 2013 week-long program, participants consist of three separate rotations that take place during August – October (King Edward Memorial Hospital, Perth). The program commenced as a pilot in 2012 and has since been expanded to include additional hospital sites.

Week 2: Leadership development opportunities

Opportunities are spread across the whole program and open to participants from all three rotations. Junior medical staff will have the opportunity to learn about leadership, communication, teamwork, project management, presentation skills, and other key skills.

Week 3: Professional improvement

The program also offers a calendar of leadership development opportunities, especially aimed at the three rotations. Senior medical leaders and other experts will help to increase the leadership capacity and capability of participating junior doctors.

Rotation #1: March – June (11 weeks)
Rotation #2: June – Aug (10 weeks)
Rotation #3: Aug – Oct (10 weeks)

The program continues as a pilot in 2014 and will be expanded to include additional hospital sites. All improvement projects will be undertaken under the leadership of the Western Australian Department of Health.

Rotation 1, 2013

- 4 sites
- 9 sites
- 11 sites
- 21 participants
- 27 participants

Rotation 3, 2014

- 5 sites
- 9 sites
- 11 sites
- 21 participants
- 27 participants

Rotation 1, 2012 (Pilot)

- 2 sites
- 6 sites
- 11 sites
- 18 participants
- 23 participants

The program continues as a pilot in 2013 and the role is now being expanded to include additional hospital sites. All improvement projects will be undertaken under the leadership of the Western Australian Department of Health.

Week 4: Clinical Service Improvement (CSI) training

Each week of the program involves a small group of between five and ten participants. The program is divided into three separate rotations that take place during August – October (King Edward Memorial Hospital, Perth).

Week 5: Project management

The program also offers a calendar of leadership development opportunities, especially aimed at the three rotations. Senior medical leaders and other experts will help to increase the leadership capacity and capability of participating junior doctors.

Week 6: Leadership development opportunities

Opportunities are spread across the whole program and open to participants from all three rotations. Junior medical staff will have the opportunity to learn about leadership, communication, teamwork, project management, presentation skills, and other key skills.

Week 7: Professional improvement

The program also offers a calendar of leadership development opportunities, especially aimed at the three rotations. Senior medical leaders and other experts will help to increase the leadership capacity and capability of participating junior doctors.

Week 8: Clinical Service Improvement (CSI) training

Each week of the program involves a small group of between five and ten participants. The program is divided into three separate rotations that take place during August – October (King Edward Memorial Hospital, Perth).

Week 9: Project management

The program also offers a calendar of leadership development opportunities, especially aimed at the three rotations. Senior medical leaders and other experts will help to increase the leadership capacity and capability of participating junior doctors.

Week 10: Leadership development opportunities

Opportunities are spread across the whole program and open to participants from all three rotations. Junior medical staff will have the opportunity to learn about leadership, communication, teamwork, project management, presentation skills, and other key skills.

Week 11: Professional improvement

The program also offers a calendar of leadership development opportunities, especially aimed at the three rotations. Senior medical leaders and other experts will help to increase the leadership capacity and capability of participating junior doctors.

Week 12: Clinical Service Improvement (CSI) training

Each week of the program involves a small group of between five and ten participants. The program is divided into three separate rotations that take place during August – October (King Edward Memorial Hospital, Perth).

Week 13: Project management

The program also offers a calendar of leadership development opportunities, especially aimed at the three rotations. Senior medical leaders and other experts will help to increase the leadership capacity and capability of participating junior doctors.

Week 14: Leadership development opportunities

Opportunities are spread across the whole program and open to participants from all three rotations. Junior medical staff will have the opportunity to learn about leadership, communication, teamwork, project management, presentation skills, and other key skills.

Week 15: Professional improvement

The program also offers a calendar of leadership development opportunities, especially aimed at the three rotations. Senior medical leaders and other experts will help to increase the leadership capacity and capability of participating junior doctors.

Future challenges and next steps

Despite the initial successes of the program, it must continue to provide valuable support to the participants to ensure that the program continues to be a successful training program.

Conclusion

The program has demonstrated that junior doctors are capable of leading improvements in the delivery of healthcare services. Allowing junior doctors to undertake service improvement projects will empower them to make a significant difference to the quality of care provided to patients.

References

6. Health System Improvement Unit, Department of Health, Western Australia.

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Further information

For more information, please contact the Medical Service Improvement Program on 13 00 36 or email medicalserviceimprovement@health.wa.gov.au.

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Table 1: Example service improvement project outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project theme</th>
<th>Project example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Improved communication channels between hospital departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Improved access to patient information systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Improved documentation rates (initial improvement of 20% increase to 80% over 2 years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Improved billing processes (reduction in billing errors by 50%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Improved education programs (Attendance increased from 50% to 80%)</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 2: Example service improvement project outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal, organisational and system benefits</th>
<th>Example project outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Positive outcomes of improvement projects</td>
<td>Improved efficiency in patient care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved organisation skills</td>
<td>Improved communication between medical and nursing staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System benefits</td>
<td>Improved leadership and management skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible next steps</td>
<td>Improved collaboration between clinical and non-clinical professionals</td>
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The program has demonstrated that junior doctors are capable of leading improvements in the delivery of healthcare services. Allowing junior doctors to undertake service improvement projects will empower them to make a significant difference to the quality of care provided to patients.

“The program allowed me to gain an insight into the ‘behind-the-scenes’ operations of a tertiary hospital and just how much work goes into everyday functions smoothly. I was also able to contribute to clinical medicine in an entirely new light and feel more connected. It was a great learning experience.”

Project participant (2013)