

# **Training case study two**

## **Patient and Public Involvement module in an MSc Clinical Research programme**

### **Summary**

This innovative module on Patient and Public Involvement in Research was established in 2010 as part of the MSc Clinical Research programme at the Centre for Research in Primary and Community Care (CRIPACC), University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield. The University of Hertfordshire is one of only seven universities in England to be awarded the fully funded contract by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to provide the MSc in Clinical Research. In the context of developing the new Masters programme, it seemed to the course leaders that this was an ideal opportunity to introduce new clinical researchers to the idea of public engagement in research.

### **What is the aim of the training?**

The aim of the module is to enable students to understand and critically explore the social and political background against which public involvement in health research has been developed. The course leaders felt that a half-day workshop was not sufficient to cover the depth and complexity of patient and public involvement (PPI) in research and that for a Masters programme it was appropriate to provide a module in which students could fully appreciate both the theoretical and the practical aspects of public involvement.

### **Who is the target audience?**

The majority of students are nursing and allied health

professional students taking the module as part of the Masters in Clinical Research and they receive salary replacement costs and course fees from the Department of Health. It is also available as a 'stand-alone' course to health professionals engaged in clinical and health related research, who can self-fund; the fee for this is £540.

### **What does the training involve?**

The module constitutes 15 credits at Masters level on successful completion of a 2,000-word essay. It is run in two blocks of two days over a term and is delivered through four days of mixed lectures, workshops, seminars and tutorials. Topics covered include: historical context/political and policy shifts; notions of citizenship and social movements; issues of power/empowerment; a critical approach to public involvement; the work of INVOLVE Advisory Group; the impact of PPI in research; gathering the evidence base; and patients' and clinicians' perspectives. Group seminars on the role of public involvement in health-related research are presented as a formative assessment. The summative assessment involves developing a written critical analysis of patient or public involvement in a research issue related to the student's clinical area.

### **What are the outcomes?**

To date there have been three cohorts of students to undertake the module: a total of 46, two of whom have done it as a stand-alone course. The first cohort of students have successfully graduated from the Masters programme. The third cohort of 23 students have just finished attending the sessions and are due to submit their assignment next month.

### **Who developed the training? Were members of the public involved?**

The course was developed by a team of service users and members of the public who are members of the CRIPACC Public

Involvement in Research Group (PIRG) alongside academics within the Centre.

**Who delivers the training? Are members of the public involved?**

Members of the Public Involvement in Research Group are actively involved in delivering the module alongside lecturers from CRIPACC and external speakers. The module is led by Dr Jane Smiddy (Research Fellow in Public Involvement) alongside Professor Sally Kendall (Director) and Dr Patricia Wilson (Research Lead – Patient Experience and Public Involvement). External speakers include representatives from INVOLVE, the NIHR, and the James Lind Alliance. Members of the Public Involvement in Research Group also present sessions.

**How do you support participants after the training?**

No support is offered to students after they have finished the course but service users involved in delivering the course are supported through regular meetings and training opportunities within the PIRG.

**Have you evaluated the training?**

Yes, the module has been evaluated. Students rated this module as excellent and particularly valued the input from outside speakers. The majority reported that it has transformed their approach to PPI.

**When is this training most useful? Who is it most useful for?**

The course is aimed at health professionals actively involved in a research role and is particularly beneficial for research nurses and so on. This module may also be of benefit to interested people who are not health professionals but who would gain knowledge and critical thinking in relation to public involvement in research.

**Learning points for the benefit of others**

- Do not assume any prior knowledge of patient and public involvement in health research even with clinicians who have been involved in health research over a number of years.
- Having a variety of outside speakers makes this a dynamic module to attend. Students feel they are receiving “cutting-edge” preparation for PPI activities.

**Contact for more information:**

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