

The Benefits of Using an Academy Training Hub Model for Supervision of Newly Qualified Physician Associates in General Practice

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INTRODUCTION

In Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board in north Wales, Skills, Education and Training Hubs (SET) have been established in Health Board practices with a dedicated training team to support the education and development of the next generation of multi-disciplinary Primary Care Clinical Practitioners. The SET Hub model aims to produce well-rounded, safe and highly employable clinicians to meet the demands of primary care.

In November 2023 the first Physician Associate (PA) was recruited working in one of the SET Hubs as part of their internship. This position was their first position as a newly qualified PA.

The Set Hub model demonstrates how supervision provided by the SET Hub trainers benefits newly qualified PAs in becoming confident and safe in their clinical practice, enabling them to see a large variety of clinical presentations in accordance with the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA) Core Clinical Practice Curriculum (CCPC).

METHOD

Data was collated from December 2023 to July 2024 using EMIS software.

FROM INDUCTION TO INDEPENDENT CLINICS

After a robust induction period, the PA was able to run independent clinics under the direct supervision of the GP trainer being available to discuss each case, re-examine or assess the patient and develop management plans.

Within nine months into the internship, the PA progressed to running solo clinics with indirect supervision of the GP trainer. The PA was working independently; seeing patients, making decisions about diagnostic testing and developing management plans. The GP would review all patient lists at the end of each day.

The session plans designed by the Academy provided an incremental structure that enhanced the PA's confidence as a clinician. Measurable progression includes; reducing appointment times and number of 'catch up' slots which increases the number of appointments the PA has each day, creating capacity within the practice. This reduction in appointment time ensures the PA is highly employable at the end of their placement with the Academy Training Hub and is viewed as a valuable member of the MDT. The table below outlines the progression by month.

Month/s	Number of appointments	Number of catch ups	Number of supervisor reviews	Appointment length
0 - 3	8	8	1	30 MINUTES
4 - 5	10	0	7	30 MINUTES
6 - 7	18	7	2	15 MINUTES
8 - 9	20	6	2	15 MINUTES
10 - 12	21	5	1	15 MINUTES
12 +	23	5	1	15 MINUTES



This graph above illustrates the number of appointments the PA undertook from December 2023 – July 2024.

The increase in the number of appointments per month is due to a reduction in appointment times and the number of catch-up slots, therefore increasing the number of appointments created.

BENEFITS

- The scope of practice the PA is working within is wide and includes cases initially triaged but undifferentiated and complex patients with chronic conditions
- The PA participates and undertakes research, audits, and quality improvement projects, in addition to external training
- A valued member of the MDT in practice
- Demonstrating value of a PA in Primary Care
- Total of 1049 appointments created from December 2023 – July 2024

CONCLUSION

The Academy SET Hub training model demonstrates a safe and effective way for newly qualified PAs to become confident and safe in their practice, enhancing their ability to see a wide variety of clinical conditions in a supported environment with dedicated GP clinical supervision. This project has demonstrated how this training model has led to the PA decreasing their appointment times and catch-up slots to increase the number of daily appointments to ensure the PA is highly employable at the end of their time with the Academy and is viewed as a valuable member of the MDT.

PAs require supervision throughout their careers; however, it is demonstrated through this model that “hands on” clinical supervision early in the internship allows development of a wide scope of practice and competencies. Trust develops between GP clinical supervisor and PA and the clinical supervision remains but becomes more “hands off” depending on the type of cases seen and the confidence of the PA. As more PAs and other members of the MDT pass through the SET hubs it will be possible to gather even more data to support the training model that could be adopted outside North Wales.

For more information on the SET Hubs, please visit our website by using the QR code

