

Clinical Physiology ____ To date, the PC based versions of the ALPS assessment tools have been well received by the first year students, and their tutor hopes to develop further use of the tools in the future.

Clinical Physiology (Cardiology)

First year Cardiology students have been using the ALPS assessment tools to improve their reflective writing.

Cardiology students are required to write reflective essays in their second year, and the main challenge to their programme leader is that it can take some time for students to really understand how to write these essays in a way that makes them a meaningful learning experience.

In February 2009, second and third year students worked with the ALPS assessment tool "Demonstrating respect for a service user or carer". They used the paper-based version, and it was rolled out as a pilot to see how it worked. It was thought the ALPS assessment tool could potentially be used by students to provide additional evidence to support their generic assessment; "Support Patients, Colleagues and other Professionals in the delivery of care".

The students were trained in the use of the ALPS assessment tools and their practice assessors explained the purpose of the pilot. However, feedback from focus groups suggested that some students had not recognised the value to their reflective practice.

Some comments included the following;

'There's like eight questions and maybe two or three were exactly the same, just worded differently so you were writing exactly the same'

'To be honest the feedback part didn't get filled in...'

'...No I don't think any of mine did'

'They just signed it off and that was it'
(General agreement)

It became apparent that several aspects of the ALPS assessment tools were not clear to the students;

- They are student-led, not assessor-led;
- They are designed to get feedback from a variety of sources i.e. not just from their own practice assessor;
- And perhaps most importantly for this group of students, they are reflective in nature, therefore in order to benefit they needed to describe the "how" and the "why" not just the "what".

The key message above is that these aspects need to be reinforced in future training to prevent low levels of engagement.

Cardiology students in practice have access to PCs and this year it was agreed to take advantage of the developments within ALPS – specifically the ability for students to access downloaded versions of the ALPS assessment tools on a PC.

First year students have been asked to complete the first (self reflective) section of the tools whilst they are out in practice for comment by their tutor. The purpose behind this is to introduce students to reflective practice and reflective writing earlier, and before their second year when they have to begin producing reflective essays.

To date, the PC based versions of the ALPS assessment tools have been well received by the first year students, and their tutor hopes to develop further use of the tools in the future;

'...it (student use of the ALPS assessment tools) means I can provide feedback to the student for them to improve their reflective writing, next year we may be able to encourage them to get feedback from their service users as well.'



Students in Practice
Students learn and are assessed in practice (above).

ALPS assessment tools are reflective in nature, therefore in order to benefit, students have to describe the how and the why not just the what

