Clinical Placement Orientation - a transferable approach

We developed an orientation session to be held six weekly at Flinders Rural Clinical School for health science students undertaking clinical placements at Mount Gambier Hospital.

The University must provide a rural medical training experience for all health science students undertaking a short-term or long-term (Rural Clinical School) placement which:

- ensures (as far as possible) the student’s physical safety and comfort;
- does not impose undue financial hardship on the student;
- is culturally appropriate (where applicable);
- is to a standard at least equivalent to that provided to students in metropolitan settings;
- must be consistent with Australian Medical Council requirements for medical curriculum.

Student orientation had previously been held at the Hospital however the timing of sessions resulted in some students missing out on attending orientation at the beginning of their placement. In collaboration with the Hospital, Flinders University Rural Clinical School staff developed a program to meet the accreditation requirements of the Hospital.

In June 2011 during a medication safety meeting at Mount Gambier and Districts Health Services, it was identified that there had been a significant increase in blood and body fluid exposure injuries and medication errors by medical students. This information was generated at the local OHS committee; this report was forwarded on to the Director of Clinical Training at Mount Gambier and Districts Health Services. During discussions around what orientation was given, it was identified that new students get no orientation to equipment or roles and responsibilities relating to safety in this area. It was identified that some students undergoing clinical placement at MGDHS had no orientation at all, which meant students entered the Hospital with no orientation regarding legislated requirements for confidentiality or other Hospital responsibilities and agreements. Flinders University Rural Clinical School staff have worked to support and assist the Hospital to adhere to CHSA accreditation standards. We decided to implement an orientation program for Mount Gambier Hospital to cover these areas of significance, in the best interest of students on placement from any University.

We also took into account the key strategies of the Flinders University Strategic plan being - enhancing educational opportunities; enhancing the student experience; valuing quality in teaching and valuing our people.

What was included in the orientation –?

- Tour of the Hospital
- Mount Gambier and Districts Health Service Vision Statement
- Organisation chart
- Hospital policies
- National police check for students
- Access to Medical records for study purposes
- Application for security ID card
- Alcohol and other drugs policy
- Confidentiality agreement form
- ISBAR (Identity, Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation)
- Infection control
- How to fit and remove personal protective equipment
- Child safe environments and Midwifery
- Staff and patient safety
- Mobility checklist
- No smoking policy
- Employee assistance scheme
- Respecting patient choices
- Emergency procedures

What wasn’t included in the orientation –?

- Gloves and gowning scrub session
- Ward specific OH&S induction

Early indications show that since the introduction of this orientation program students have gained greater confidence in transition to placement. Ideally after completion of orientation students will comfortably integrate into the local work environment. The orientation program has enabled students to experience first-hand the differences and values of rural practice.

This orientation program would be easily transferable to other rural sites as this comprehensive program would meet the needs of any rural Hospital.