Placement profile

Names and roles   **Dr Kelly Walker, BSc Physiotherapy Course Director**

Organisations   University of East Anglia

Placement overview

The Year 2 BSc Physiotherapy students were scheduled to go out on an 8-week clinical placement from 20th April to 12th June 2020. This could not go ahead due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was replaced with an innovative 6-week virtual placement experience. This was developed and supported by the UEA PT lecturer team to support the 55 students.

The COVID-19 context also raised the priority for the use and development of telehealth skills in physiotherapy clinical practice and so this was identified as an important context for the virtual placement. The placement included front loading of teaching around telehealth, along with online courses/learning for health coaching and motivational interviewing. Followed by virtual case studies that were assessed and treated remotely by small groups of students, whilst being observed and reflected upon by the remaining students.

An integral part of the placement was the telehealth project where students engaged with their community as appropriate during lockdown and carried out remote physical activity discussions and interventions which were recorded as evidence and students were required to provide justification for the approach used. There was an opportunity to discuss telehealth with clinicians and we also utilise as many clinician and patient videos as possible.

Supervision: 55 students on placement, 4-6 students together with remote supervision, peer learning

Lessons learnt:

1. The placement improved students communication skills and learnt how to adapt for remote consultations
2. The students improved their digital literacy
3. Peer learning worked well as students learnt from each other

Top tips for others:

- "Where possible integrate clinicians using telehealth in practice"
- "Where possible integrate service users throughout the placement"
- "Ensure students are prepared for the telehealth environment, considering both the IT and the changes to the interpersonal skills required"

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