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Abstract of paper

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Reflections on using e-Learning to deliver a Nurse Prescribing Programme

As part of a UK Government initiative to meet the demands of patients for a more accessible and flexible UK National Health Service there have been considerable changes to the role of healthcare workers extending well beyond traditional boundaries. One example of this has been to extend the traditional role of nurses by developing their skills of consultation, diagnosis and use of medication. As part of this, the UK Government has funded an initiative to train qualified nurses to prescribe medication independently of doctors. The medical profession has not universally accepted this initiative.

In order to become a Nurse Prescriber, a nurse must undergo an approved university educational programme, which consists of theory and a period of practice supervised by doctors. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has required that nurses undertaking this course have some formal university attendance and assessment in practice. Successful students are then recorded on the NMC Register. A traditional taught course requires attendance for 26 days, whereas use of e-learning has reduced this attendance down to 6 days.

Since October 2004, the University of Winchester has used e-learning for the delivery of the Nurse Prescribing Programme using the on-line course programme developed by E-map Publishing in conjunction with the University of Sterling. Therefore, the University of Winchester now delivers the Nurse Prescribing Course using a blended learning programme.

The paper presents a critical reflective analysis on the use of e-learning in a blended learning programme to support a Government funded initiative to drive change in a conservative medical environment.