REducing Variation in health professional UndergraduatE health programmes on Stroke through collaborative research and development (REVUES)

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MAIN FINDINGS

The stroke-specific content of undergraduate healthcare professional programmes varies within and between disciplines

Frameworks can highlight unmet learning needs in existing curriculums and contribute to the provision of clinically relevant teaching

Augmentative online resources complement existing provision, can increase knowledge, and are acceptable to undergraduates

BACKGROUND

Why is stroke-specific education important?
More than 100,000 strokes occur each year in the UK[1]. Care on acute specialised stroke units (ASSUs) can improve patient outcomes[2]. The delivery of safe and effective stroke care, in line with national standards, requires a workforce equipped with the correct knowledge and skills, and access to "fit for purpose" stroke-specific education[3]. The Department of Health funded Stroke-Specific Education Framework (SSEF)[5] outlines the minimum level of knowledge and skills required by newly qualified healthcare professionals (HCPs). Research has shown substantial gaps in the stroke-specific knowledge of 3rd year HCP students[4].

How can stroke-specific education be standardised?
The SSEF allows the comparison of HCP programmes and provides the opportunity to standardise provision. The identification of shared unmet learning needs may enable the development of educational resources suitable for use in multidisciplinary HCP education.

AIMS

1. To explore the stroke-specific content of undergraduate HCP programmes
2. To develop an educational resource to complement existing curriculae
3. To investigate the impact of the resource on the knowledge of users
4. To explore the acceptability of the educational resource with users

METHODS

- Mixed methods
- Undergraduate HCP programmes were purposively sampled to ensure maximum variation
- Programme content was mapped to relevant SSEF Band 5 Knowledge profile
- Undergraduate knowledge was assessed utilising a SSEF online self-assessment tool
- Results compared to identify unmet learning needs
- Online educational resource developed (fig. 2)
- A second SSEF self-assessment was undertaken by undergraduates to ascertain changes in knowledge
- Semi-structured interviews and a feedback survey explored the acceptability and feasibility of the resource
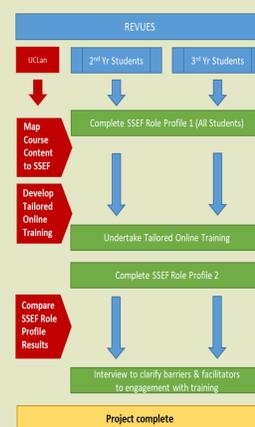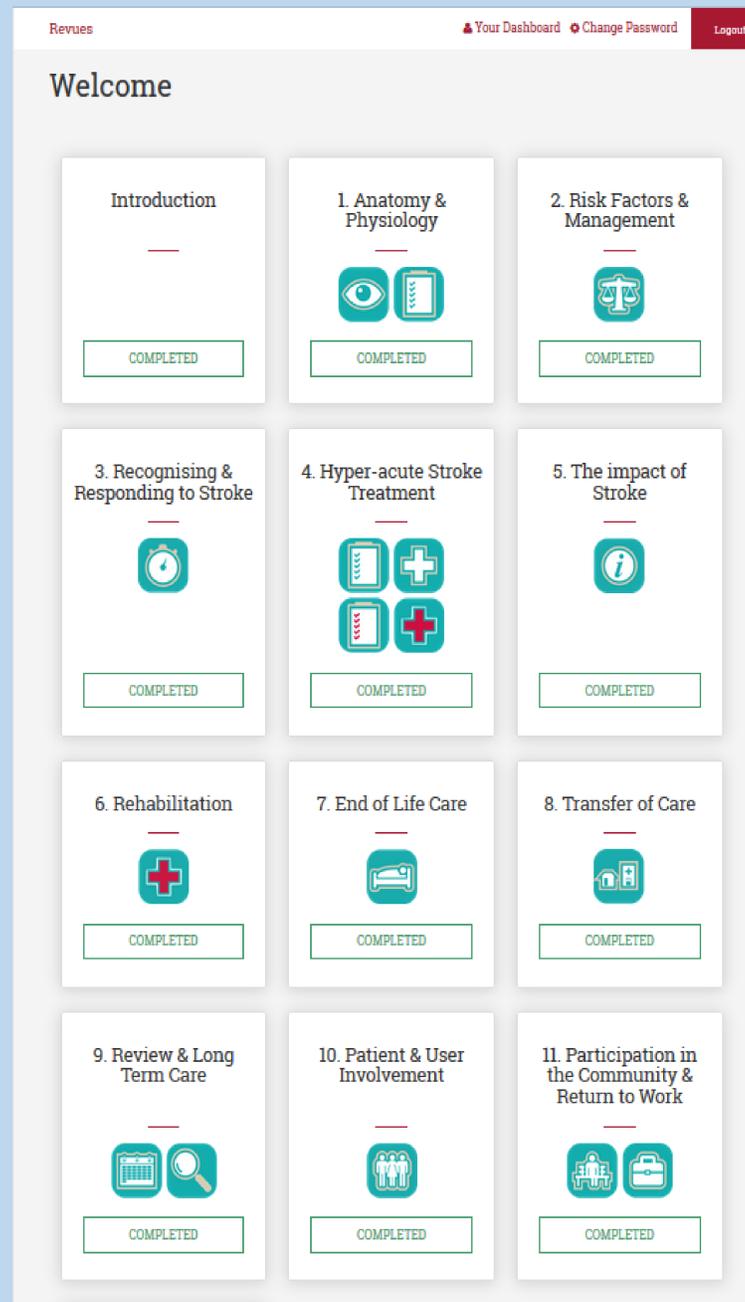

Figure 1: Flow diagram of project plan

Figure 2: Screenshot of the REVUES Online Educational Resource contents page

RESULTS

- Identified HCP programmes were: Adult Nursing (N=3), Occupational Therapy (N=1), Orthoptics (N=1), Physiotherapy (N=3), and Speech and Language Therapy (N=1), in three Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England

- There was variation in the degree to which stroke-specific content of programmes matched the SSEF (N=9, range 28% - 94%). This variation existed not only between but also within HCP programmes e.g. Nursing, 28% to 71%; Physiotherapy, 46% to 94%

- A Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed **a statistically significant increase in knowledge** following REVUES online training, Z = -3.06, p < .002, with a large effect size (r = .60). The median % knowledge match to the SSEF increased from pre-REVUES (Md = 61) to post-REVUES (Md = 81)

- Completion of additional training was deemed acceptable with the majority or undergraduates (55%) suggesting signposting of augmentative resources during 2nd year of study
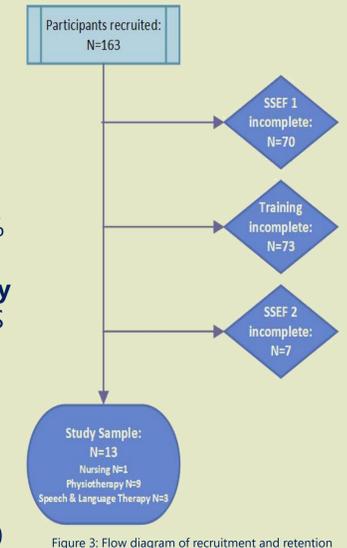

Figure 3: Flow diagram of recruitment and retention

CONCLUSION

This research suggests the stroke-specific content of undergraduate HCP programmes may not be sufficient to satisfy the SSEF knowledge and skill requirements. Furthermore there is diversity of taught SSEF elements between and within the disciplines. Online education supplemented taught face-to-face lectures and was reported to be a feasible, acceptable and effective method of improving stroke-specific knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- HEI's should consider developing course content in line with the SSEF
- Signposting access to online educational resource should be considered
- Undergraduates should be encouraged to utilise the SSEF to identify their stroke-specific learning needs and gain understanding of their professional role profile prior to engaging in clinical practice

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