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GUEST EDITORIAL

Arenas for developing practice – a new meeting point between academia and healthcare providers

Kristin Ørmen Johnsen and Heidi Kapstad

In this guest editorial we will discuss how Buskerud University College and the Health and Technology Science Centre aim to improve practice in the healthcare services through dialogue with practice, research, development work and innovation. The need for new methods to take care of the growing population of older people and those with long term and complex health needs is a challenge for the academic world and the field of practice. One of BUC's strategic targets is to develop knowledge to meet future healthcare needs.

The board of BUC decided that the Faculty of Health Sciences should be responsible for running and developing the Health and Technology Science Centre. The mayor of Buskerud County opened the Science Centre in September 2012. Collaborative partners in the Centre are: Buskerud County; eight municipalities in the county; the Regional Labour and Welfare Service (NAV); Vestre Viken Hospital Trust, comprising four hospitals; and a regional business cluster working with health and welfare technology.

The Health and Technology Science Centre is a creative venue for innovation, research and learning in healthcare. It consists of a hospital ward that functions as an area for practising, and developing professional skills as a health worker. It has a full-scale X-ray laboratory, a simulation room for practising procedures and patient care, a flat (living room, bathroom and bedroom) fully equipped with modern healthcare training technology, an electronic sense stimulator for patients with different types of dementia and a room for interaction with people with mental health needs. Attached to the Centre is a classroom with facilities for video transmission to the municipalities, the hospital and other educational institutions.

Our mission is that the Centre, alongside our collaborative partners, will develop fresh knowledge to improve health and health services for older people and those with long term health needs. The aim is also to create knowledge to promote vision care, clinical practice and protect visual health as we age. This is done through prevention, early detection and the use of vision rehabilitation services.


Future challenges

The future challenges for healthcare services are the growing numbers of older people and persons with long term and complex health needs. Persons with long term and/or complex health conditions are vulnerable. In Norway, like in many other countries, person-centred principles – like autonomy, dignity, respect, trust, patient needs, patient safety, independence and user-participation – are central to the healthcare system and policy. These are the basic values that underpin all activities in the Science Centre. The future will require use of new technology in the healthcare services – innovations that can help people to cope with their own life and health. Health and welfare technology should not reduce the need for face-to-face contact with healthcare workers; its aim is to promote safety and quality of life for those who need help. Further, such technologies need to be tailored to individuals.

The Health and Technology Science Centre has received funding from The Norwegian Council of Research for a comprehensive project linking education research with simulation training and observational study in primary care and hospital settings. Training programmes for different professions and education levels are offered at the Centre.

Research areas

Buskerud University College is aiming to boost professional knowledge to improve practice. Research based education is important and relevant for students; it will prepare them for a professional career where relationships often are complex and challenges have to be met with knowledge based creativity. Research also supports the professions' aims to improve practice not only by the transfer of practical skills, but also by development of knowledge and innovation.

Box 1: About Buskerud University College, Norway	
Buskerud University College <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three campuses: Hønefoss, Kongsberg and Drammen• 300 full-time employees• 4,000 students	 BUSKERUD University College
Faculty of Health Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Optometry and Visual Science• Department of Radiography and Health Technology• Department of Nursing Science• 100 employees• 12 full-time and four part-time professors• 1,000 students	

Healthcare is the main research and educational area at the Faculty of Health Sciences. The Faculty has four areas of strategic focus:

1. Mental health and substance abuse
2. Healthcare for older people and those with long term and complex health needs
3. Eye research with focus on development and ageing
4. Medical use of radiation and service development

We seek to develop a research and educational environment in which researchers can engage in research that involves contact with healthcare professionals, service users and mental health and social service practitioners. Our focus is to explore and study people's health needs and experiences of what has helped them, as well as how they can be supported.

The College's vision is that the Faculty of Health Sciences will be an excellent resource centre and arena for health education, research, innovation and provision of person-centred and multidisciplinary healthcare, with a special focus on primary care. The overall aim is to improve healthcare practice.

As part of our international research activities, the College is now a member of two collaboratives: the International Practice Development Collaborative (IPDC) and the International Community of Practice for research in Person-centred Practice. With our collaborators in both networks, we are generating a range of research and development activities.

Kristin Ørmen Johnsen (BN), Rector and Associate Professor, Department of Administration, Buskerud University College, Kongsberg, Norway.

Heidi Kapstad (PhD, RN), Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences and Associate Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Buskerud.