



Preparing for clinical placement

Catherine O'Connor offers tips and advice to first-year students going on clinical placement for the first time

AT THIS time of the year, many first-year students will be preparing for their first clinical placement. While going on your first placement can be an exciting experience as you will finally be able to put what you have been learning into practice, it is normal to feel a bit nervous as well. This month's article will look at some tips to help you to prepare for your first placement.

Before attending placement

First impressions matter, so it is important to make sure you are well rested and punctual for your first day of placement. Plan your route out to your placement site and remember to factor in time for traffic, a late bus, or difficulty finding a parking spot. It is worth packing a lunch the night before and bringing a bottle of water for the first day; you can then see what the canteen is like after that.

One of the hallmarks of a good nurse/midwife is always having a pen – so don't forget to bring a spare. Make sure that you know what your higher education institute (HEI) and clinical placement site's uniform policy is and adhere to it closely.

It is also important to be familiar with the policy regarding sick leave in case you need to miss a placement day.

Learning while on placement

While you will have learned a lot during your academic block, there will be a huge amount of information to take in while on placement. Don't be afraid to ask your preceptor questions and to take the initiative of asking to accompany them if they're going to perform a task you think you would benefit from seeing.

You will also have a clinical placement co-ordinator (CPC) assigned to you who can answer your questions as well. It is a good idea to bring a small notebook with you to keep in your pocket to write down unfamiliar terms or medications to look up later.

Many students find that protective reflective time (PRT) is an ideal opportunity to look up new terms heard in handover or to research the side effects or indications of medications. All students should have time equivalent to a minimum of four hours per week of PRT, as per the NMBI Nursing/Midwifery Registration Programmes Standards and Requirements.

Remember when doing your research that in addition to your HEI's library, the INMO has a specialist nursing/midwifery library for members; details available at: www.nurse2nurse.ie

Know the relevant policies/standards

While on clinical placement, it is important that you are aware of the various policies, standards and guidelines that affect you.

Your HEI and clinical placement site will have local policies, but the NMBI also sets standards, requirements and guidelines which you must follow; these are accessible at www.nmbi.ie/Standards-Guidance

It is vital that you are aware of your scope of practice, domains of competence and code of conduct while on placement. Additionally, your college and clinical placement site will likely inform you of their social media policy, but it is worth bearing in mind that the NMBI also has a guidance document, also available at www.nmbi.ie/Standards-Guidance

Seeking support while on placement

While the support of the preceptor and CPC in the clinical placement site are readily accessible, it can be easy to forget about the other supports available to you. Some students find they can feel isolated during clinical placement blocks as they feel removed from the normal student life while attending lectures on campus.

This is likely to be even more of a reality this year as HEIs take a blended approach



to learning in order to comply with public health advice. Remember that while you are on placement you remain a student of your HEI and can avail of the supports they offer, including your link lecturer/personal tutors, health services and counselling services. INMO members also have access to a 24-hour counselling helpline service; details available at: www.inmo.ie/membership_benefits.

It is also important to keep in touch with your family and friends while on a placement block, as it really does make a difference.

Finally, remember that the INMO is here to support you while you are on clinical placement. If you are experiencing issues while on placement or have a question, do not be afraid to get in touch. It is important that each class has an INMO rep who is linked in with me; if your group does not have one then please discuss this and nominate one person to get in touch.

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