**The leadership crisis: a quick fix or long term change?**

Recent headlines suggest leadership in the NHS has been focused on the wrong priorities and a government drive to put leadership development high on the agenda to drive through innovation and improve patient services has resulted in a plethora of leadership programmes. Is this a quick fix or will there be a long lasting impact? How do managers navigate what’s on offer? Jan Davis, Director of Programmes at the Centre for Innovation and Leadership, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southampton explains what’s important in any leadership programme and what to look for.

The prolific coverage of the many avoidable deaths at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust has highlighted poor leadership, a healthcare system in disarray and has shocked the nation. The Francis report revealed that reducing costs and achieving targets was given a higher priority than focusing on the patient and the quality of patient care, patient safety and achieving good patient outcomes. The recommendations highlighted the importance of good leadership with a common 'patient first' culture emphasising compassion, candour and transparency.

Currently there are a number of leadership development programmes being offered to NHS staff. Sending staff to attend a short leadership programme or an online course whilst convenient, may not be the answer to understand and begin to solve the complex and diversified problems facing leaders in healthcare organisations today.

Good leadership is imperative but there is no magic bullet or leadership technique that guarantees success. However, the principles of ethical leadership underpinned by sound personal values and integrity create the basis for success.

The University of Southampton, a member of the University’s prestigious Russell Group, is one of the UK’s most respected educational institutions. The Faculty of Health Sciences places great value on multi-professional learning, which enables students from different clinical backgrounds to learn together in order to better understand the perspectives of other professional groups, build mutual respect and break down stereotypes and boundaries.

Our aim is to develop a world class setting for international leadership and knowledge development relating to health care, improving health outcomes and for the professional development of clinical leaders of the future. The Faculty’s firm belief is that leadership qualities begin with the individual to know how to lead one-self before leading others and the focus within the MSc Leadership in Health and Social care is on values, character and integrity, so that core relational skills develop alongside organisational know how.

Anne Baileff, director of programmes: advanced and expert practice, recognises ‘the critical role high performing individuals and teams play in making a real and positive impact on the culture and provision of healthcare of the highest standard’.

Our Faculty’s purpose is to develop exceptional leaders and compassionate practitioners who are able and confident to make skilled and ethical decisions in different situations, keeping patients’ needs as their priority.

We are also excited about our new BSc (Hons) Healthcare Management, Policy and Research programme, which is a non-clinical degree aimed at potential healthcare leaders, policy experts and healthcare researchers of the future. The programme was designed in consultation with providers of health related placement schemes and the feedback from employers has been fantastic. They see a real need for future graduates with the skillset this programme provides.

The recognition that many students will need to fit their studies around full time work has ensured that postgraduate programmes provided by our Centre for Innovation and Leadership are flexible and can be studied part time, with a choice of optional modules to suit individual interests and needs. Our assessments relate to, and inform, practice relevant to the workplace and professional background.

Dr Sue Duke, programme lead for MSc Clinical Leadership in Cancer, Palliative and End of Life Care says ‘This particular MSc programme is designed to progressively enhance clinical talent, the ability to lead and transform services, to develop others and to contribute to clinical research in the specialties of cancer, palliative and end of life care. An important central theme of the programme is the relational skills needed for clinical leadership. Students can therefore expect to mix with clinical experts and renowned researchers to explore the inter-relationship between theory, practice and research’.

Enlightened organisations will realise that there is no quick fix to skilled leadership development. Focusing on core personal and professional values and paying attention to these using a collaborative, community of practice will however, reap huge rewards.



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For more information: [www.southampton.ac.uk/healthsciences](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/healthsciences)