

Case study of advisor involvement: Patsy Yates



'Our National Cancer Nursing Education Program, EdCaN, was funded by Cancer Australia in about 2006. It was funded for four years to design the program.

Now we could have started by sort of saying "Well, this is what the profession says nurses need to know." But instead we said: "Well, rather than having that just curriculum-content focus, let's take a step back and ask what the patient needs are across the journey, and then ask what are the capabilities required for nurses to address those needs?"

As part of that project, we spent a bit of time reviewing the literature and having focus groups with patients—people affected by cancer at all stages of the journey—to get them to tell us their needs and how they felt nurses could contribute. The patients advised us on what should be included. We then used that to develop a framework and a suite of educational materials with the patients in the centre. We focused on the nursing skills and competencies needed to actually improve the patient experience.

The modules ended up being like case studies, if you like, and we got a series of vignettes for filming where we were looking at developing nursing skills, but we kept bringing them back to what difference that makes for patients. It was a great opportunity to look at developing educational programs in a different way: not from the profession defining it, but really a bit of a collaboration. The consumers were there at every stage, advising us on filming the case studies. We tried to match what the patients were saying with what the competency standards for nurses are professionally and asked ourselves: "How do we actually come up with something that matches that need?"

With each of the case studies, in addition to having a professional review them, we had consumers review all of them plus the modules. The consumers provided great input into what those case studies should look like. We ended up developing about 13 case studies, each with a different focus. So, we would find 2-3 people who could relate to that cancer experience and provide comment.

Another important part of that project was that the steering group was chaired by a consumer (a consumer who had some academic experience in the past, but not as a nurse). It was fantastic actually: he had the right set of skills and really kept us focused on the sort of approach that we were trying to achieve.

I know that part of the success of EdCaN is that the nurses doing the program are really engaged because they can connect with the patient experience. Because we've designed the program to be centred around patients, it's been such a success. It's also been a model that people have looked at internationally. One of the advantages is that when you have authentic learning experiences, it's just so engaging, and we have had no problem getting people to take up the program. So, in terms of dissemination and the real world stuff it's just so important.'

—Patsy Yates, Chair, Queensland University of Technology School of Nursing

