

Preparing New Zealand nurses for infection prevention and control through mentorship

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Problem

Infection prevention and control (IPC) plays a vital role across all areas of healthcare. The recent pandemic highlighted the critical need for New Zealand nurses to possess fundamental IPC skills to ensure healthcare safety at all times.

To bridge this gap, the New Zealand Infection Prevention and Control Nurses College (IPCNC) launched the Fundamentals of IPC Programme in 2020, a concise best practice online course designed to enhance foundational IPC knowledge and skills. Nurses were mentored, as opposed to being supervised and coached. Mentorship is relationship and development focused, supervision is accountability focused, and coaching is performance focused.

Results

Mentorship played a crucial role in enhancing the IPC learning experience and professional development of nurses who came from acute care, aged care, and primary care settings. Experienced IPC mentors provided essential guidance, support, and expertise to 271 mentees as they completed ten self-directed workbooks over four months. The online success rate was 73%.

Mentors clarified complex concepts, offered practical insights, and helped apply theoretical knowledge to real-world IPC concerns.

Mentoring in small cohorts facilitated the application of IPC concepts to sector-specific challenges, enhanced collaboration, and provided personalised support that addressed gaps in self-study. Mentorship enabled sustained motivation, accountability, and peer learning.

Conclusion

IPCNC mentors served as role models, sharing their expertise and guiding nurses throughout the course. Graduates have been equipped to competently address ongoing and emerging infection control challenges and have demonstrated significant personal and professional growth.

Lessons learnt

Mentoring in IPC is a strategic tool for professional development, workforce resilience, and in nurturing future IPC experts.

“Great course! Very well-structured/scaffolded and excellent mentor support. I have certainly learnt the fundamentals of IPC.”

“Your encouragement and mentorship greatly contributed to my learning and successful completion of the IPC course.
I am truly grateful for the time, patience and effort you invested in supporting me, and I look forward to applying the knowledge and skills I have gained.”

“The shared sessions were very useful and created opportunities for learning and networking.”

IPC mentoring has given me more confidence in my role as the IPC champion in our ward. I get to provide better support to my colleagues and act as a liaison with the IPC Clinical Nurse Specialist in our clinical area - Richard



Mentoring helped improve my clinical management skills and my understanding of what constitutes "safe practice" in protecting patients, health workers, and the public from transmissible infectious diseases - Joyce

