

Fit for Practice in the Genetics/Genomics Era : a revised competence based framework for nurse education

Preliminary Report



This revised framework sets out the minimum level of competence required by all nurses in the UK at the point of registration. It has been developed through consensus and builds upon the original framework first set out in 2003 (Kirk et al. ¹) This updated version (see opposite) will ensure that the patient and their family/carers remain at the centre of the care journey both now and in the future.

Why the review?

Nurse education and training must reflect the changing face of healthcare. Recognising the pace of genetics/genomics research, the original team in 2003 recommended that a review of the original framework take place within 5-10 years. In the intervening period, our knowledge and understanding of genetics and genomics has grown significantly and its translation into patient benefit continues. The Nursing and Midwifery Council has also been developing new pre-registration education standards during 2009/2010 and as such, it was felt timely to undertake this review of the genetic competences. As a result, explicit guidance in relation to genetics/genomics will be available to educators as they incorporate the new NMC standards into curricula.

The approach

The project team convened a national meeting involving nurses in practice and management, educators, policy makers and patient representatives. Attendees reviewed patient/carer stories illustrating a range of life-stages and practice areas. Five key themes (see Fig. 1 Key themes) were used to prompt discussion and participants considered two questions: *What are the patient/carer needs? (including family members and carers)* and *What does the nurse need to know, think and do in order to meet those needs?*

Resulting statements were mapped to the original framework to identify gaps and areas requiring updating. Changes were made to the original competences to reflect the discussion that took place on the day and this new framework has subsequently been endorsed by the meeting participants.

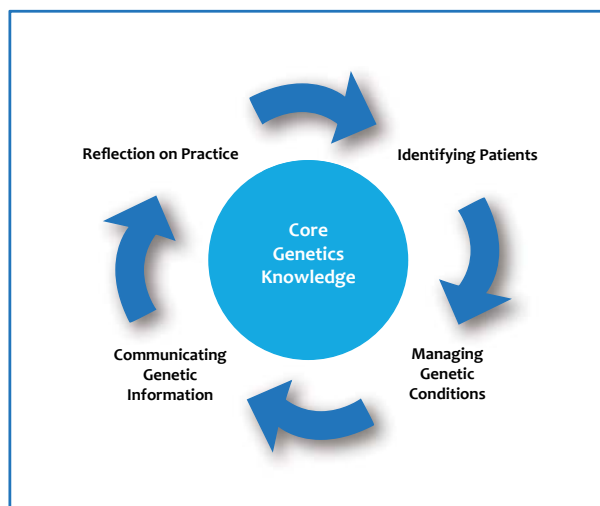


Fig. 1 Key themes

Outcomes of the review

A new competence (competence 8) has been added. This highlights the importance of ongoing nursing care to address the needs of both the individual and their family/carer that may change over time. Revisions were made to all of the original statements. In particular, competence 1 now reflects the need to include family history information as part of a comprehensive nursing assessment and competence 6 actively emphasises the responsibility of nurses to remain current in their own sphere of practice.

In addition to the new framework the team is currently working with educators to develop learning outcomes and signposting to quality resources that can be integrated into degree level, nurse training programmes without putting significant additional pressure onto curricula. This information will be made available during autumn 2010 to coincide with the publication of the NMC’s new education standards.

A separate review is currently being undertaken for the midwifery profession.

¹ Kirk M, McDonald K, Anstey S, Longley M (2003) Fit for Practice in the Genetics Era. A competence based education framework for nurses, midwives and health visitors. Pontypridd ISBN: 1-84054-104-0

Nursing competences in genetics/genomics: revised framework 2010

1. Identify clients who might benefit from genetic services and/or information through a comprehensive nursing assessment:

- that recognises the importance of family history in assessing predisposition to disease, and
- recognises the key indicators of a potential genetic condition,
- taking appropriate action to seek assistance from and refer to genetics specialists and peer support resources,
- based on an understanding of the patient pathways that incorporate genetics services and information.

2. Demonstrate the importance of sensitivity in tailoring genetic information and services to clients' culture, knowledge, language ability and developmental stage:

- recognising that ethnicity, culture, religion, ethical perspectives and developmental stage may influence the clients' ability to utilise these.

3. Advocate for the rights of all clients to informed decision making and voluntary action:

- based on an awareness of the potential for misuse of human genetic information and
- understanding the importance of delivering genetic education and counselling fairly, accurately and without coercion or personal bias,
- recognising that personal values and beliefs of self and client may influence the care and support provided during decision-making.

4. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the role of genetic/genomic and other factors in maintaining health and in the manifestation, modification and prevention of disease expression, to underpin effective practice.

5. Apply knowledge and understanding of the utility and limitations of genetic testing and information to underpin care and support for individuals and families prior to, during and following decision-making, that incorporates:

- awareness of the ethical, legal and social issues related to testing and recording of genetic information,
- awareness of the potential physical, psychological and social consequences of genetic information for individuals, family members, and communities.

6. Examine one's own competency of practice on a regular basis in order to:

- recognise areas where professional development related to genetics/genomics would be beneficial,
- maintain awareness of clinical developments in genetics/genomics that are likely to be of most relevance to the client group, and
- based on an understanding of the boundaries of one's professional role in the referral, provision or follow-up to genetics services.

7. Obtain and communicate credible, current information about genetics, for self, clients and colleagues:

- using information technologies and other information sources effectively to do so, and
- applying critical appraisal skills to assess the quality of information accessed.

8. Provide ongoing nursing care and support to patients, carers and families with genetic healthcare needs:

- being responsive to changing needs through the lifestages,
- demonstrating awareness about how an inherited condition, and its implications for family members, might impact on family dynamics,
- working in partnership with patients, carers, family members and other agencies in the management of conditions,
- recognising the expertise of patients and carers with enduring genetic healthcare needs that develops over time and with experience.

Project Team

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