

The use of SMS and social media to support reflective practice for health students in Indigenous health and education placements

Tim Barlott, Alison Nelson, Kirsty Jackson, Jannah Rulfs
The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Introduction: Critical reflection is an important developmental skill for health professional students, particularly in an Indigenous health context. Students on placement in Indigenous health settings, due to the diversity of locations and disparate nature of placement times and structures, have limited avenues or opportunities to engage in structured reflection.

Objectives: This project aimed to develop the use of SMS and social media as tools for encouraging reflective practice and dialogue among health professional students on placement in Indigenous health settings.

Methods: This community-based research project used action research methods to develop the use of SMS and social media with health professional students on placement. Four action research phases occurred over a two-year period, iteratively developing a six-week reflective practice program. Mixed methods were used throughout the project, however this presentation focuses on qualitative results of the fourth phase of the project. Using a focus group, we explored the collective experience of eight health professional students who participated in the project.

Results: Preliminary findings suggest that SMS is an effective tool for sharing resources and engaging students in self-reflection. The introduction of a structured messaging schedule and automated SMS messaging was well received by students and increased the capacity of the cultural mentor to support reflective practice.

Conclusion: SMS and social media are feasible tools for encouraging reflective practice and reflective dialogue for health professional students on placement in Indigenous health settings. These tools are also likely to be effective for students on placement in remote and rural practice settings.