

Journal Summary Paper: Practical Placement at Mackenzie Health

As I reflect on my four-month practicum placement at Mackenzie Health, I am struck by the profound impact this experience has had on my professional growth and understanding of health informatics. My role as a summer intern in the Clinical Informatics department has been both challenging and rewarding, offering me invaluable insights into the practical application of health informatics principles in a dynamic healthcare setting.

Personal Assessment of Learning Experience

When I first stepped into my role at Mackenzie Health, I was immediately aware of the stark contrast between my academic background in research and the corporate healthcare environment I now found myself in. The transition was not without its challenges. I quickly realized that the expectations in this setting were vastly different from what I was accustomed to in academia. Here, there was an emphasis on independent work and self-directed task management – a significant departure from the closely supervised research environment I was used to.

My primary responsibility was updating the hospital's downtime policies, a task that proved to be an excellent opportunity to apply my analytical skills in a real-world context. As I delved into existing policies, updated tip sheets, and conducted comparative analyses with leading hospitals, I found myself drawing on knowledge from various aspects of my studies. The foundations of information and communication technology in healthcare that I had studied came to life as I grappled with the critical importance of robust systems for technology failure scenarios. It wasn't just about having a plan on paper; it was about ensuring that every healthcare professional knew exactly what to do in a crisis to maintain patient care standards.

Throughout the project, I applied knowledge from my MHI courses, particularly in system design processes and healthcare innovation. Developing the BCA Check Framework was a pivotal learning experience, creating a tool to assess nurse educators' downtime preparedness across departments. Conducting audits using this framework was an eye-opening experience. It not only helped me identify knowledge gaps but also taught me the importance of effective communication in healthcare settings. Using the Fishbone diagram to analyze audit results demonstrated the power of structured problem-solving in healthcare informatics. Discussing findings with department analysts improved my ability to communicate complex information and collaborate with diverse stakeholders.

Impact of Learning on Practicum Performance

Looking back, I can clearly see my growth trajectory throughout the practicum. In the beginning, I struggled with the transition from a research-oriented mindset to a more action-oriented approach required in the hospital setting. My initial hesitation in reaching out to colleagues and taking initiative was a significant hurdle. However, with guidance from my manager during our weekly meetings and through conscious effort, I began to adapt to the corporate healthcare culture.

The learning curve was steep, but as I became more comfortable with my role and the expectations, I saw a marked improvement in my performance. The practical application of concepts I had studied, such as enterprise architecture principles and change management strategies, played a crucial role in improving my performance. I found myself increasingly able to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this journey was seeing the tangible impact of my work. The second round of audits with nurse educators showed clear improvement in their performance, validating the effectiveness of the knowledge transfer strategies we had implemented. This experience taught me the importance of continuous learning and adaptation in healthcare informatics – a field where technology and processes are constantly evolving.

My communication skills, both written and verbal, significantly improved over the course of the placement. Initially, I found it challenging to articulate complex technical concepts to healthcare professionals from various backgrounds. However, as I gained more experience and received feedback, I learned to tailor my communication style effectively to different audiences.

Implications for Future Professional Development in Health Informatics

This placement has shaped my vision for a future in health informatics, helping identify areas that resonate with my skills and interests, particularly in healthcare system resilience and risk management. I've gained a deeper appreciation for the critical role that health informatics plays in enhancing patient care and operational efficiency. The practical skills I've acquired – from policy analysis to project management – have significantly enhanced my professional toolkit. Moreover, the soft skills I've developed, such as interdepartmental communication and leadership in cross-functional teams, will be invaluable in my future career.

This experience has also broadened my understanding of the healthcare technology landscape. I've gained insights into current challenges facing healthcare IT, such as

ensuring system reliability and effective knowledge transfer among staff. It's become clear to me that the future of health informatics lies not just in implementing new technologies, but in ensuring that these technologies are seamlessly integrated into healthcare workflows and fully utilized by all staff.

The professional network I've built during this placement is another crucial aspect of my development. Interactions with various professionals, from nurse educators to IT analysts, have given me a comprehensive view of the different roles within health informatics. These connections will undoubtedly be valuable as I progress in my career.

Looking towards my future in health informatics, I feel both excited and prepared. This placement has confirmed my passion for the field and has given me a clearer direction for my career path. I'm particularly interested in pursuing roles that involve optimizing healthcare processes through technology, with a focus on enhancing system resilience and staff preparedness.

Conclusion

This practicum at Mackenzie Health has been truly transformative, challenging me to grow both professionally and personally. The hands-on experience of updating policies and developing assessment tools solidified my passion for health informatics. While my academic program laid a crucial foundation, it was the daily challenges and real-world applications that shaped my growth. This journey has enhanced my skills and deepened my understanding of healthcare's complexities. I am eager to apply these learnings and continue growing in this dynamic and impactful profession.