

Letter to the Editor

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Dear Sir,

I read with interest the article on professional scholarship through workshop series by Ewing et al [1]. I concur that "through writing, publishing and presenting health professionals can share their accomplishments, develop personally and professionally and contribute to the development of the health care system."

The Rwanda Neonatal Care Programme, a collaboration between the Rwanda Paediatric Association (RPA) and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) in the UK, is currently working to reduce neonatal mortality through a combination of mentoring, quality improvement and education. Ewing et al's description of the challenges facing a multi-session modular training programme resonated.

In particular: the attrition rate, difficulty getting attendees who have travelled far (especially from health centres), and the preponderance of nurses over doctors (whilst there are small numbers of all personnel, the nurses seem marginally more able to leave their clinical duties). We also found the culture of 'per diem' difficult to overcome as hospital administrations were not keen to invite staff to attend training without a financial incentive. We offered Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points as another form of incentive, however it took several months to organise this through the nursing and medical councils.

In light of these challenges, we adapted our training, and many of these adaptations are in line with Ewing et al's discussion for future improvements. We limited the duration of formal modules and instead concentrated on work-place based training which fits into the medical day. We provide attendance certificates every session for use in portfolios and have a 'tick chart' on the wall of the neonatal unit so nurses can document, and feel pride in, their attendance. We altered teaching from didactic sessions to small group work, and in particular simulation.

Whilst the changes seem to have allowed us to access a greater breadth of health professionals to teach in a more meaningful way, ultimately the question is whether the knowledge will be retained. As Ewing et al suggest, it would be useful to "Incorporate a process to follow participants post workshop for at least one year to evaluate scholarly outcomes".

Best Regards,

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REFERENCES

1. Ewing H, Pyburn R, Asingizwe D, Asiimwe-Kateera BA, Njunwa K, Kim MJ. Facilitating health professional scholarship through a workshop series at the University of Rwanda. *Rwanda Med J.* 2017;74(2):12–16.