

### **Mentoring - Scenario 2 (Nurse Practitioner)**

Jackie is a Nurse Practitioner working in the specialty field of women's health in a rural community. During her Masters degree, she was required to engage a mentor from her chosen clinical field to provide ongoing professional support and clinical supervision throughout the program. Kay is an experienced Nurse Practitioner in the field of women's health. Kay provided formal mentoring supervision for Jackie during her university studies, a relationship that has continued beyond the completion of Jackie's degree. Kay continues to provide regular opportunities to talk with Jackie, in order to provide mentorship support. Both she and Jackie view the relationship as a long term commitment, with the aim of improving clinical practice and assisting personal growth and career development.

Jackie has been working in a women's health clinic attached to a small rural hospital for approximately one year. She is the only Nurse Practitioner in the local health district. Kay lives 150 kilometres away, and works in the emergency department of a large tertiary hospital. Due to Jackie's remote location, she and Kay maintain contact mostly via email, phone and Skype, allocating time each month for regular scheduled discussions. They have agreed to allow flexible contact between the arranged sessions, according to Jackie's needs. Their discussions are confidential, within the boundaries of ensuring patient safety.

Kay phones Jackie for their regular monthly mentoring session. Kay plans to use the discussion as an opportunity to evaluate the goals and strategies established during their last mentoring session, and provide feedback.

"Hi Jackie. Good to talk to you. How are things going out there? Last time we spoke, we talked about some goals you had regarding the support you were providing to women undergoing IVF treatment in your area. You noticed that many were travelling long distances to IVF clinics in order to have their blood taken at specific times in their cycle. You found that many women would travel to the clinics, only to find that they had missed the blood collection courier."

"Yes that's right Kay. Last time we spoke, we discussed some strategies for establishing a reliable blood collection service for these women. I arranged a 'blood collection day', a set day each week when blood samples would be collected. The central location of the clinic, and it's proximity to other health services and shopping centres, made it a more convenient location for these women to attend. I was able to order the blood tests and take the blood myself, and was able to ensure regular courier collection times, so that patients weren't missing out or having their treatment delayed."

Kay asks Jackie some questions to evaluate the progress and efficacy of her plan. Jackie informs Kay that the blood collection program proved very successful for the first few weeks, with no reports of missed collections or difficulties with accessibility. Jackie states that the plan 'came unstuck' after the third week, when the courier failed to arrive to collect the blood samples. As a result, samples were lost, the women's time was wasted and their treatment was delayed. On investigation, Jackie had found that one of the senior nurses at the hospital had cancelled the courier service. When Jackie asked her why she had done this, she was met with hostility and told "that's not how we do things here". The nurse was dismissive, and stated that she had not heard of the scheme, and "in any case" believed that Nurse Practitioner services were a separate entity and did not have a place in the hospital.

Jackie describes feeling frustrated and discouraged by the nurse's response. Kaye empathises with Jackie, acknowledging that the setback must have been disappointing for her. She asks if Jackie has faced similar situations in the past. Jackie states that resistance from other health professionals to the Nurse Practitioner role was an issue she had frequently encountered since starting work at the clinic. She describes feeling professionally isolated at times, often as a result of subtle behaviour, such as health professionals failing to make referrals to her services, or nurses within the hospital and community excluding her from senior nursing forums (eg. nursing committees and meetings). She also describes occasions where she was met with overtly obstructive behaviour from colleagues, and outward expressions of disapproval about her role and the validity of her experience and qualifications.

She states that she encountered this when she began performing pap smears and colposcopies for Aboriginal women at the clinic. Jackie viewed the initiative as an opportunity to address some of the 'gaps' in the existing services, and reach out to and engage with a group of people who were often reluctant to access hospitals and medical centres. Due to the remote location, many of the doctors in the area were employed on a temporary 'fly in, fly out' basis, making it difficult for them to develop trust and rapport with their Aboriginal clients. The Nurse Practitioner role allowed Jackie the opportunity to build long term relationships with these women, and improve rates of attendance at health services. Unfortunately, the colposcopy clinic met with strong resistance, with many local doctors refusing to make referrals and publicly disparaging the program, accusing Jackie of trying to "take over" their role.

Kay acknowledges that 'tall poppy syndrome', role confusion and resistance from other health professionals are challenges commonly faced by Nurse Practitioners. She shares some of her own experiences with Jackie, and describes strategies she found helpful in overcoming these challenges. She also provides some constructive feedback on Jackie's approach to setting up the service, explaining that communication and preparation are important aspects to consider before launching a new role or scheme. She suggests they explore strategies to improve her approach in future.

Kay guides Jackie in establishing new goals, to overcome her sense of professional isolation and ensure the delivery of high quality care to her patients.

Jackie's goal is to establish new pathways to increase interdisciplinary communication and collegiality within the women's health field. She plans to measure this goal by her ability to demonstrate a collaborative, inclusive and coordinated approach to the delivery of the blood collection service for patients on IVF treatment.

Kay and Jackie discuss strategies for forming new avenues of communication between herself and other health professionals in the area. Jackie is initially unsure of what specific actions she can take to achieve this goal. Kay makes some recommendations. She suggests that Jackie invite local health professionals to attend a meeting or in-service, allowing her the opportunity to introduce herself formally, explain her role and answer any questions they may have regarding her scope of practice. She advises Jackie to highlight the point that it is not her role to 'take over' or replace the work they do, but rather, to look at how she can contribute to existing services and work with them as a team. Jackie decides to use the meeting as an opportunity to discuss her revised scheme for a blood collection service for patients on IVF treatment. She plans to provide information on the proposal, including the rationale behind it and practical aspects of how it might operate best to meet the needs of

these women. She plans to include any interested staff in the planning and implementation of the scheme. She hopes these strategies will increase awareness and ensure adequate preparation has been put in place to allow for the smooth and uninterrupted delivery of the service.

Kay also recommends enlisting “role champions” to help improve interdisciplinary communication – health professionals from various disciplines with whom Jackie has a good rapport. She suggests that Jackie educate them on her role and the services she provides, so that they may pass on the information to others in their profession, creating greater awareness and acceptance of the Nurse Practitioner role. Kay also suggests that Jackie approach the Director of Nursing and Midwifery and the Nurse Practitioner Coordinator for her local health district, and communicate her desire to be included in future nursing forums.

Before concluding their session, Kay asks Jackie to consider some professional development and networking opportunities. She informs Jackie of an upcoming “Community of Interest” conference to be held at the nearest tertiary hospital. She explains that these conferences allow health professionals from all disciplines to present and share ideas and research related to a particular specialty field. Jackie expresses her interest and Kay agrees to provide further information.

Kay and Jackie conclude their conversation by reflecting on their new goals and strategies. Jackie thanks Kay for her time and advice and confirms the time and date for their next mentoring session.