

NEW GENERATION PROJECT

One of the key reasons why ANSA was initially established was to provide support, and a platform for nurses working within the field of substance use, who felt isolated and were struggling to get their respective voices heard about the importance and need to work with people and communities affected by substances within our society. For many years now ANSA has been attempting to be true to this objective, and while its members have continued to 'fight the good fight', increasingly it is becoming more apparent that tobacco, alcohol and drug problems are continuing to impact, and that despite best efforts, there is a need for 'greater participation' by all nurses to appreciate their role and potential to assist in this wider public health agenda. This is even more important given the achievements in tobacco, alcohol and drug problem research in public health and individual/family interventions that can reduce and promote recovery and abstinence.

Public health costs - Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

Problematic substance use (including tobacco and alcohol) is part of everyday clinical practice for most working nurses. A fact that is not surprising when the magnitude of the problem is calculated in terms of the costs to society.

- Over the last 10 years, the costs of illegal drug use to Britain has reached £110billion (£100 billion crime related costs; £10 billion on health related costs), compared with just £3billion has been spent on efforts to prevent, treat, and manage the problem
- Each person who remains dependent on illegal drugs costs the taxpayer approximately £44,000 per year or £16.4billion a year, which is more than one-and-a-half times the cost of the Olympic Games in 2012.
- A further cost of £6 billion alcohol abuse can be added to the total associated with NHS bills, premature death, losses to business and drink-related crimes and accidents,
- Figures released in 2007 revealed that the cost to the NHS in England of treating smoking related illness reached £2.7 billion a year; around £50 million every week.

Given these figures and the related underlying public health issues, nurses must recommit to our responsibility as key health care providers with a legitimate role to play in recognizing when substance use is problematic, and advocating for the most appropriate treatment response (which may include direct action or referral onto specialist care).

New generation project

As one strand of an overall strategy to support this recommitment, ANSA is setting up a new project called 'THE NEW GENERATION' - if we are to truly bring around a sea change in attitude, knowledge and competencies needed to

address this global health problem, ANSA believes that the hope lies with the new generation of nurses coming into the profession.

The objectives of the project are to

1. **Engage** with all new nursing students in the UK regarding their role as it relates to harm reduction and recovery pathways for people whose health is affected by tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.
2. **Ensure** that all new nurses are aware of the evidence for effective early interventions and brief intervention models that exist to help those affected by tobacco, drug and alcohol misuse.
3. **Ensure** that nurses new to the profession have awareness of and access to national and international evidence based sources on interventions for tobacco, alcohol and other drug misuse, as well as local, national and international networks for learning and influencing the public health agenda e.g. international harm reduction nurses network.
4. **Explore** with new nurses their views on **training/educational needs** of student nurses related to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
5. **Develop and publish** core competencies/capabilities required to work with individuals across the spectrum of substance use (prevention to recovery)
6. Map these competencies to the **Nursing Midwifery Council** standards of proficiency for pre-registration nursing education
7. Seek to influence changes to the NMC standards of **proficiency for pre-registration** nursing education to ensure that the competencies/capabilities for working with problematic substance use are incorporated
8. Provide a platform for student nurses with an interest in alcohol, tobacco and other drugs so that they can **network and influence** changes within their respective HEI's; service provider organizations; professional and service users influencing bodies, and local and national policy development bodies.
9. Commence a dialogue with HEI's with responsibility to deliver **validated pre-registration nurse training** on how to ensure that nurses on completion of their training have the requisite attitudes, knowledge and skills (competencies/capabilities) to undertake their legitimate role in working with individuals/families/society in the area of substance misuse.
10. To ensure that nurses new to the profession participate in local and national/international knowledge generation projects to enhance effective service development and delivery
11. Assist service user and carer projects to work along side the 'new generation' of nurses so that they can be aware and participate in the use of early intervention and brief interventions which could both assist them individually but could also be used by them to help others.

NEXT STEPS

We are seeking to establish a project team to begin the above work as soon as possible. If you are a key stakeholder (which includes):

- A representative of the new generation of nurses (e.g. student nurses),
- Supporting/training the new generation of nurses e.g. qualified nurses (currently acting as mentors)
- A nurse educator (currently working within HEI's delivering nurse training)
- A service user
- A carers
- A clinical leader
- A director or manager of services
- A researcher
- An advocate

and interested in getting involved, please contact us.

The project leads within ANSA are

Peter Kelly
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We would love to hear from you. E-mail us at ANSA (m.carr@ansauk.org).