Innovative roles in nursing: the case for Modern Matrons?

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Matron as a caricature
The rationale

- The NHS Plan (DoH 2000) proposal that every hospital should have ‘modern matrons’ - senior sisters and charge nurses, accountable for a group of wards and easily identifiable to patients, in order to improve delivery of patient care and focus the responsibility for care.

- The ‘modern matron’ as a response to a perceived need for a strong clinical leader with clear authority at ward and unit level.

- Many ward sisters were struggling with their responsibilities due to lack of support; growing complexity of the role which had led to increased stress.
Aims and methods

- The comparison of the roles of the Modern Matron across the Trust
- To explore their roles in relation to 10 key responsibilities
- To identify key issues that impact on their posts
- To explore the possible impact that the roles have on improving the patient’s experience
- To consider how service users and their carers view the Modern Matron
10 key responsibilities

– Leading by example
– Making sure patients get quality care
– Ensuring staffing is appropriate to patient needs
– Empowering nurses to take a wider range of clinical tasks
– Improving hospital cleanliness
– Ensuring patients’ nutritional needs are met
– Improving wards for patients
– Making sure patients are treated with respect
– Preventing hospital acquired infection
– Resolving problems for patients and their relatives by building closer relationships
Methods of data collection

- attendance at Modern Matron Forums
- interviews with Modern Matrons (n=10)
- interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. managers; senior/executive staff) (n = 6)
- attempts to access service users’/carers’ views on the Modern Matron role
- preparation of feedback and presentation to participants in the Modern Matron Forum to elicit their views
Findings

• Configuration of the role
• The nature of the role and responsibilities
• Organisational relationships and supports
• Role facilitators and challenges
• Impact of role on staff and service users
Role title and recognition

- I think the only confusing thing is sometimes for patients, they say.. “well what’s a Modern Matron compared to a Matron? And I think sometimes working with an older population it does sometimes confuse people and so I don’t know whether the Modern needs to be in

- I think to the public it absolutely says what they think. … As a Matron I must be in charge…and therefore, if there is anything they want …, they believe that I will be able to sort it out.
The nature of the role and responsibilities

- Management of nursing and nurses
- Promotion of high standards and quality of care
- Providing leadership
- Effective communicator, link and strategist
- Autonomous decision-making
- Control over budgets
- Relationship of roles to key responsibilities
Organisational relationships and supports

• **Role in the organisation**

*For the managerial part of my role, it’s very useful to have somebody who is a manager themselves. So the Service Manager, I can talk to about performance management and I can talk budgets and I can talk about all sorts of things with them, but with [a nurse manager] I can talk about my developments and about nursing, which is really important to have a nurse to talk to about nursing…*

• **Support mechanisms**
Role facilitators and challenges

- relationships
- resources
- professional learning and development
- time pressures
- scope
- dedicated administrative support
- geography
Impact of role on staff and service users

- **Impact on staff**
  - role-modelling
  - reflective practice groups
  - practice development

- **Service user experience**
  - improvements to the clinical environment
  - advocate
  - improvements in the service
  - champion
I guess before the Modern Matron existed there was the Senior Clinical Nurse; she/he may not have had so much political influence but I’m sure they did the same job, but now I guess matrons are more visible; they are in your face; they do exist everywhere; they do have a defined job role, and I think in that respect therefore they are seen to be doing a lot of good work. There’s a lot of stuff that we’ve done with regard to … policies and loads of things that the Modern Matrons have been instrumental in actually getting the workforce engaged in, and making it happen at the rock face, as it were….now it probably would have happened if a Modern Matron wasn’t there. But it may not have actually happened quite so efficiently …so quickly ….I think we’re value for money…
Modern matrons today