

Study provides insight into how health services for older people are carried out

March 21 2016, by Mark Barrow

A study led by Bangor University has provided a fresh insight into how health services for older people are carried out.

OPSWISE, launched in November 2013 and headed by Professor Jo Rycroft-Malone, Pro Vice-Chancellor, investigates the roles of support workers to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge when caring for [older people](#). By utilising 'realist synthesis', a theory based on synthesising evidence, the study has shed fresh light on practice and policy surrounding health and [social care](#). This was informed by consulting with patients and public representatives.

The UK has an aging population, with predictions suggesting one in five people will be aged over 65 by 2033. Professor Rycroft-Malone is confident the study will lead to real impact on the quality of healthcare this aging population will experience, saying "There is a great challenge in our services to provide a high standard of social care for older people, so it is vital to try and develop our current training programmes, especially for assistant care workers as they make up the largest workforce. "

The study has identified several key areas that need to be addressed. For example all support workers need to be recognised and rewarded for their ideas, and for the systems they operate in to learn from them and training needs to be grounded in the reality of the work and draw on real life examples and experiences.

The project is affiliated with the University of St Andrews and the Queen Mary University. It comes as Bangor University is celebrating the launch of the Institute for Health and Medical Research, an innovative programme that will also contribute to improving patient care across the UK and beyond.

Professor Chris Burton, Head of Healthcare Sciences and an OPSWISE researcher, believes the findings will further consolidate Bangor's research excellence. He said: "It is the latest example of Bangor's world-leading research for clinical care. It's important that we develop a strategy that is mindful of the needs for older people, support workers, healthcare managers and organisations, and that is what our study will help to do."

The study has undergone four phases and is now almost complete, with publication set for May 2016. It will primarily make practical recommendations for improving current training and development practices and though it will be mainly directed towards the NHS other sectors that use assistant workers, like teaching, may also find its findings useful.

More information: Further information on OPSWISE can be found at www.nets.nihr.ac.uk/projects/hsdr/1212932

Provided by Bangor University

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