

Workplace-based learning for clinical associate students

MODULES :
Clinical Medical Practice (CMP 181)
Clinical Medical Practice (CMP 182)
Clinical Medical Practice (CMP 281)
Clinical Medical Practice (CMP 282)
Women's Health (CMP 381)
Child Health (CMP 382)
Emergency Care (CMP 383)
Infectious & Chronic Diseases (CMP 384)
Anaesthetics (CMP 385)
Mental Health (CMP 386)
Orthopaedics (CMP 387)

Course description

A clinical associate is a professional member of the health care team with the necessary knowledge and skills to make a substantial contribution within the district health system of South Africa. Teamwork and communication skills are critical and clinical associates need good clinical skills to manage common ailments and diseases. Clinical associates work as part of the medical team and are supervised by doctors in the performance of all practice-related activities, including the requisition of diagnostic, therapeutic and other medical services, based on their education, training and experience. Clinical associates collaborate as members of the multidisciplinary health care team in district health care services.

To register as a clinical associate with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), a student has to obtain the Bachelor of Clinical Medical Practice degree. Potential employers include the Department of Health, the South African Military Health Service and non-governmental organisations.

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The Bachelor of Clinical Medical

Practice degree is a three-year, full-time programme and has a strong focus on service learning. The training is practical, patient-oriented and can be summarised as follows:

- **Year 1:** Theoretical, practical and clinical training takes place mostly at the Prinshof Campus. The focus is on obtaining patients' medical history, mastering physical examination techniques and basic investigative studies. Students are placed in various hospitals in Gauteng.
- **Years 2 and 3:** Clinical practicals are based in various hospitals in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and other provinces. Clinical skills are gained through service learning in hospitals, clinics and community contexts.

Community challenges

Human resources for health care in South Africa are under severe strain. Medical schools have not been able to significantly increase the output of medical practitioners. Most doctors practice in urban areas, leaving rural areas with a severe shortage of clinicians. Many qualified professionals have emigrated, while the increase in workload due to the rising burden of disease has all but overwhelmed those who remain. In the face of a relentlessly burdensome workload, compassion and empathy have fallen victim to the tide of need. Health care in South Africa is in crisis both for a lack of carers and for want of caring. To increase the supply of clinicians to serve the underserved and mostly rural poor who depend on the public health care service, the training of a new cadre of mid-level medical workers, similar to clinical officers or physician assistants in other countries, started in 2008.

Opportunity description

By working and learning in the health care service (hospitals, clinics and community services) students help qualified health professionals with their tasks. The tasks they can safely perform increase in frequency and complexity as they progress through the course. This in-practice learning prepares students very effectively for the service they will render as qualified clinical associates. Upon graduation they are work ready and fit effectively into the workplace with minimal adjustments.

Impact

Already as students they render services to patients and help to carry some of the workload of the health care professionals (medical doctors, nursing professionals and others) who supervise and facilitate their training.

Community partners

Ward-based Outreach Teams (WBOT)
Community-oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP)

Clinical Learning Centres (CLCs)	Province
Barberton	Mpumalanga
Nelspruit	Mpumalanga
Shongwe	Mpumalanga
Tonga	Mpumalanga
Ermelo	Mpumalanga
Middelburg	Mpumalanga
Witbank	Mpumalanga
GJ Crooks	KwaZulu-Natal
Lebowakgomo	Limpopo
1 Mil Hospital	Gauteng
Kalafong	Gauteng
Mamelodi	Gauteng
Tshwane District Hospital	Gauteng
Tembisa	Gauteng

