Dignity: At the heart of everything at the Royal College of Nursing with e-learning playing a vital role.

**Introduction**

In June 2008, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) launched their ‘*Dignity: at the heart of everything we do*’ campaign because in the nursing profession, ‘Dignity’ is at the heart of everything they do and is clearly a vital component of nursing care.

**Winner** of the *Bronze Award* in the ‘*Excellence in the Production of Learning Content – Not for Profit Sector*’, this case study describes how the RCN sought to ensure the greatest flexibility of access of the Dignity campaign resources to every member of the nursing workforce in order to remind them to prioritise dignity in care and place it at the heart of everything they do. Now that’s an aggressive target so how did they set about meeting it?

A survey of RCN members had previously revealed that 50% of nurses preferred to undertake their continuing professional development (CPD) at home or at work. The RCN Learning Zone was then designed as a CPD application which enables RCN members’ free access, 24 hours a day, to an integrated area on the RCN website.

**The solution**

The RCN aims to highlight that dignity is the essence of nursing care and should be at the heart of everything they do as a profession. The Dignity resource takes between two and four hours to complete, with learners able to dip in and out of the content as time allows, completing it at their own pace, while keeping a record of their progress.

Text is combined with graphics, multimedia and interactive elements to support the effective and efficient transfer of learning to practice. With increasing take-up the resource is being heavily utilised to great effect by the nursing profession as it fits ideally into their work/life style balance, recognising that they are ‘time-starved’ individuals.

Specifically, the Dignity content achieves this through the use of:

- Thought-provoking imagery including photographs and comic-style graphics
- Immersive interactivity such as work based scenarios and quizzes
- Compelling multimedia elements incorporating audio and video files
Reflective learning and implementation tools such as case studies and action plans.

What has helped to make the programme different and widely used has been the creative use of the an evocative movie clip, accompanied by a sound file of a deeply moving poem, both involving older people, to assist learners to explore their own attitudes, beliefs and values about dignity so they might better understand their own behaviours and make positive changes in their practice to support more dignified care.

They’ve also cleverly used comic-style graphics to provide variety in the way the text is presented which keeps the learner engaged. Case studies throughout the resource help connect theory with the realities of practice.

The programme also puts staff at the centre of processes through the artful use of immersive interactivity – re-creating real situations where, for example some tasks, some places, and some illnesses might be considered by some people to be undignified.

Finally an action plan that explores how to communicate in a dignified way in which all parties feel comfortable, respected and valued helps the learner to transfer their learning into practice.

Results & Feedback

A wide range of stakeholders were involved in the Dignity campaign and all the resources developed to support it including: over 40 key MPs; the Health Secretary who name checked the RCN in his health speech in the House of Commons (June 08); and the Department of Health’s dignity lead, Sir Michael Parkinson who liaised with campaign staff and lectured at RCN Congress 2009, praising and supporting this work. Some specific comments to endorse the programme resource, adoption and acceptance are summarised in the table below:

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<th>“The most exciting piece of work that I have been involved in during my career. Working with stakeholders across the UK, all sectors and all areas of practice on an issue that is so important for nursing has been very humbling and incredibly exciting”.</th>
<th>“It has been a privilege and honour for Smith &amp; Nephew Healthcare to work with the RCN on the Dignity Campaign. It has identified how supporting a campaign of this nature can make a true difference for both the nursing staff and the patients alike”.</th>
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<td>“Will work on this with nursing students – it is excellent”</td>
<td>“The Dignity resource on the Learning Zone is fantastic!”</td>
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<td>“It confirms that I maintain dignity with my patients but also highlighted areas that can be addressed within the younger members of our department. It reminded me of the dignity in a dying process is all important apart from the day to day dignified care of a person.”</td>
<td>“We have been impressed by the learning zone resource and aim to roll the scheme out across the Trust. We can ensure equality of opportunity to all across the trust, thus enhancing our patients’ experience.”</td>
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“Firstly, congratulations on the Dignity resource on the Learning Zone, it is fantastic!”

“I do not know of an e-learning module of this kind in our country, especially not focusing on dignity.”

“I found this very useful as a tool to raise my own personal issues about dignity as part of equality and diversity.”

“The questions are really thought provoking and I think this will improve my practice.”

**Impact and Conclusions**

The RCN Learning Zone currently has over 10,000 RCN members registered to use the service and continued promotion of the site to the current membership, together with an increasing number of nurses indicating they preferred on-line or distance learning for their CPD, the potential audience is closer to 400,000 members.

This innovative programme resource helps support the overall Dignity campaign for the RCN by combining learning and information in one place, enabling nurses to find and apply the information they need to improve patient care, at a time and place when it’s most convenient for them to learn.

The availability of the Learning Zone to a large number of nurses across the UK and internationally, means that its impact on individual nurses, the nursing profession at large and ultimately patient care is significant.

**Top Tips**

- A variety of media will help to engage busy professionals in a caring industry.
- Respect time demands and work/life style factors on the target audience(s).
- Adopt creative approaches to reinforce the learning bringing it to life with poems, quizzes, scenarios, case studies.
- Research your audience needs and preferences through surveys and questionnaires, and act accordingly on the findings.