

Introduction to the genetics series

Kirk M (2005) Introduction to the genetics series. *Nursing Standard*. 20, 1, 48.

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Summary

This article provides a brief introduction to a seven-week series of articles that are underpinned by a competence-based genetics education framework. The series of articles aims to raise awareness of genetics and help readers develop confidence in dealing appropriately with genetic issues that arise in their area of practice.

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Keywords

Gene therapy; Genetic counselling; Genetic disorders

These keywords are based on the subject headings from the British Nursing Index. This article has been subject to double-blind review. For related articles and author guidelines visit our online archive at www.nursing-standard.co.uk and search using the keywords.

The NHS needs to respond adequately to developments in the field of genetics, as outlined in the White Paper *Our Inheritance, Our Future* (Department of Health (DH) 2003). Health professionals' education was a key objective and, to support this, the DH commissioned education guidelines for nurses, midwives and health visitors.

Publication of a competence-based education framework for all nursing professionals was the next step in improving knowledge and awareness (Kirk *et al* 2003). The document contains seven competence standard statements with suggested learning outcomes and practice indicators. They were developed through expert consensus and wider consultation (Yeomans and Kirk 2004).

Over the next seven weeks we will be publishing a series of articles, each focusing on one of the competence standard statements (Box 1). The purpose of each article will be to: raise awareness of the relevance of genetics to improve professional practice; focus on different aspects of practice encompassed by the competence standard statement to help readers link competency statements to their practice; and offer guidance to help readers meet some of the learning outcomes and practice indicators outlined in the framework.

The articles are intended to help readers

BOX 1

Seven competence standard statements

All nurses, midwives and health visitors, at the point of registration, should be able to:

1. Identify clients who might benefit from genetic services and information.
2. Appreciate the importance of sensitivity in tailoring genetic information and services to clients' culture, knowledge and language level.
3. Uphold the rights of all clients to informed decision making and voluntary action.
4. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the role of genetic and other factors in maintaining health and in the manifestation, modification and prevention of disease expression, to underpin effective practice.
5. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the utility and limitations of genetic testing and information.
6. Recognise the limitations of one's own genetics expertise.
7. Obtain and communicate credible, current information about genetics, for self, clients and colleagues.

(Kirk *et al* 2003)

develop confidence in dealing with the complex genetic issues that arise in each area of practice, recognising when appropriate expert advice is needed **NS**

References

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- Yeomans A, Kirk M** (2004) Genetics for beginners. *Nursing Standard*. 18, 40, 14-17.