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EDITORIAL

Growing nurse rebels: a synergy with clinical academic career development

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Background

This is the second journal edition dedicated to the Chief Nurse Research Fellows development projects (Underwood *et al.*, 2022). Coaching these future clinical academics on this programme affords a personal reflection on a time when I was taught to make impactful - evidence informed - change in challenging practice situations. I graduated from the School of Health and Care Radicals in 2016, now The School for Change Agents(<http://horizonsnhs.com/school/>). I had been schooled in '*Rocking the Boat*' and had my change agent skills developed and nurtured in order to send ripples of change, as I slowly rocked and agitated the metaphorical waters of local healthcare structures and services to introduce change and make it stick. This led me to consider the leadership traits of healthcare radicals and rebels and how we should develop these traits in our future clinical academics.

Nurse rebel traits and the clinical academic

de Kok *et al.* (2021) in their scoping review described three conceptual aspects of rebel nurse leadership: a 'positive deviance approach', meaning the rebel consciously and systematically used behaviour change methods (capability, opportunity and motivation (Michie *et al.*, 2011) in their change situation; they adopt unconventional and non-confirmative behaviours, rubbing against the norm to make the 'best' change happen (always centred on the patient with a focus on positive outcomes); and draw on important social networks and relationships, often seen as a role model, influencing others and spreading successful practice. Underpinning these conceptual aspects, the scoping review highlighted several competencies. These include the ability to collaborate inside and outside their organisation; to absorb and share expert evidence-based knowledge; to critically reflect on the problems with practice and their processes, being daring to challenge the norm; and to actively generate new ideas and potential solutions to improve care (de Kok *et al.*, 2021).

These conceptual aspects of the rebel nurse leader and underpinning competencies have synergy with the development of junior clinical practitioners to realise their potential and become our future clinical academics.

Their paper highlights three factors that are central in the development of rebel leaders (de Kok *et al.*, 2021): they describe 'dialogue and reflection', recognising the importance of facilitated multi-professional reflective debate to confidently share experiences and to develop and construct new ideas; networks and alliances are key to spread new ideas and deviant actions; and the 'role of management', noting that although positive deviance is always bottom-up, management involvement and support is important to understand, align and maximise support.

Conclusion

It is useful to consider the conceptual aspects and competencies highlighted in the rebel nurse leadership literature (de Kok *et al.*, 2021) to identify future healthcare rebels and develop them in future clinical academic programmes.

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