

Best Practice 1

1. Title of the practice: Mind Matters- Psychological services for students and staff of Sankara Academy of Vision

2. The context that required the initiation of the practice:

As the students move from school to college, there are several challenges that the students experience during this transition. Coming from different schools, cities, and socio-economic backgrounds, joining a professional college gives rise to adjustment difficulties. Also, through the college years, factors such as managing the curriculum, expectations from self and the college, academic pressure, teaching methodologies, shortcomings in infrastructure expectations, and relational aspects between teachers and students can impact their wellbeing. For the teachers, managing the expectations and demands of teaching, the load of administrative tasks, and continuing clinical practice can affect their wellbeing. Objectively measured stress using the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-42), 63% of students showed mild to severe signs of depression, anxiety, and stress. Therefore, Mind Matters initiated psychological services for all the students and staff of the college.

3. Objectives of the practice

- Promote wellbeing and empower the students and the staff
- Improve students' overall learning experience and the staff's teaching experience by identifying the gaps through a constant feedback gathering process and making appropriate recommendations.

4. The Practice:

- For the new joiners, 3 induction sessions have been held where the focus is on team building and skills required for adjusting to a new environment.
- Awareness sessions on Anti-Bullying and Anti-Ragging policies of the college are also conducted as part of the induction program.
- Through workshops and campaign activities, students are also sensitised and made aware of the effects of substance use and abuse.
- For students of all years, 9 Life-Skill classes have been conducted each year to encourage them. The topics included are self-awareness, time- management, empathy, problem solving, and dealing with challenging relationships.
- Along with life skills, classes are also conducted to understand and practice professional skills. These include topics like Communication and Patient Management.

- Examinations can be a stressful time for students; 6 pre-exam counselling have been conducted for the students (2 every year). This session addresses the exam anxiety they may face and is focused on equipping the students with strategies to overcome that stress.
- 6 Post-Result (2 every year) counseling sessions have been conducted to provide moral support to students to face situations with determination.
- Three-month feedback is gathered from students regarding their wellbeing and learning experience, including research activities.
- Yearly stress level assessment done for students using Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-42).
- For the teachers, 1 training to identify mental health signs has been conducted along with 2 refresher courses.
- Bi-yearly Staff Feedback is conducted where the focus is on their teaching experience, training requirements, and research experience. Qualitative feedback is obtained through individual feedback sessions, and gaps identified are communicated to respective stakeholders.
- For all the students and staff of the college, individual consultation is made accessible. The staff and students are encouraged to approach Mind Matters for any personal problems affecting their job role or academic performance.
- Opportunities for counselling for the parents of the students are made available.

5. Obstacles faced if any, and strategies adopted to overcome them:

- Lack of Awareness: There was a lack of awareness of how psychological wellbeing can impact an individual's performance among staff and students.

The strategy adopted: This obstacle was tackled by conducting campaigns and workshops about psychological wellbeing aimed at sensitizing the staff and students, which was well-attended. Furthermore, through these sessions, signposting for different services was made possible.

- Challenges in implementing changes: The initial challenge was getting everyone on board to change according to the recommendations received.

The strategy adopted: This obstacle was tackled by having all stakeholders, including students and staff, be part of the decision-making process and then implementing the recommendations. All recommendations are negotiated rather than being directive and finally agreed upon by all stakeholders.

6. Impact of the practice:

- Overall, student satisfaction improved, as reported on the yearly student satisfaction survey.
- There was a reduction in the grievances of staff and students by addressing the gaps identified through feedback.
- Academic calendar was developed based on the feedback from students.
- The need to improve teaching methodologies was identified through feedback and 2 teacher-training workshops (1 internal and 1 external) were conducted.
- 55% of counseling referrals were made by the teachers.
- An increase in individual consultations were noticed where 9% of students and 30% of the staff have readily accessed individual counselling sessions.
- On measuring the stress levels following these services, there has been a decline in the stress levels where 29.3% of students now showed mild to severe signs of depression, anxiety, and stress which was measured using the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-42).

7. Resources required

- The thorough groundwork for identifying and developing modules which are relevant to students.
- Trained Professionals: Two trained Psychologists are facilitating the services.
- An individual counselling room is available.
- Students and staff can make direct contact with Mind Matters through email.

Best Practice 2

1. Title of the practice

'Design thinking' as a tool to enhance the innovation to provide early recognition of eye ailments & enable independent living for the blind.

2. The context that required the initiation of the practice

Sankara Eye Hospital Bangalore was exposed to design thinking as a means of solution identification through volunteers at SAP India. (<https://blogs.sap.com/2014/09/29/design-thinking-in-eye-care/>)

Over the years the principles have been applied in evolving solutions towards improving end to end patient care and also during COVID19.

Can Students be trained to be innovative? Often in allied health students are trained to function in an algorithmic approach. However , the reality in health care is the asymmetry in the number of professionals to the patients (1.4 billion) and the barriers of accessibility , availability & affordability. To encourage this we looked at introducing structured design thinking principles to our students.

3. Objectives of the practice

- Help students & faculty with a process that helped in identifying a "Problem" and then find a most relevant "Solution" for the same. The process helps them define a specific question in a How Might We (HMW) format based on research . prototyping & observation in rapid iterative cycles.
- Innovation- Improving problem-solving by designing better products/ services/ strategies in the area of interest.
- Look at low cost prototypes as a proof of concept that could help move from lab to bedside.
- Encourage empathy as the model focussed on a 'Persona' , for whom the solution is designed.

4. The Practice

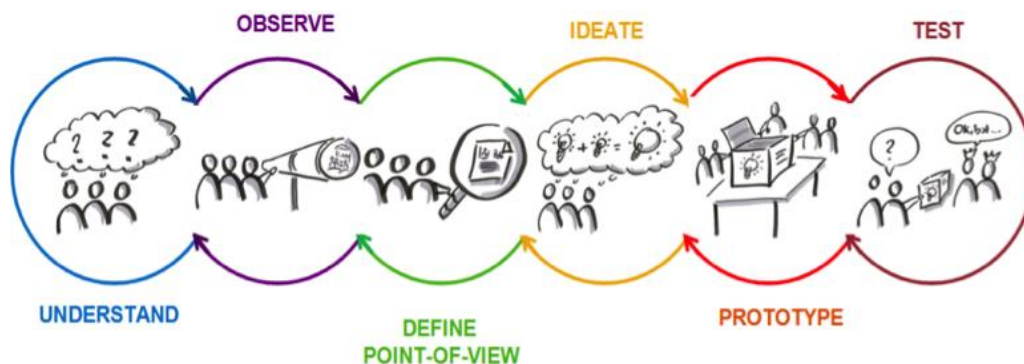
Design thinking is a non-linear, iterative process that seeks to understand users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions to prototype and test. **Design Thinking** is extremely **useful in** tackling problems that are ill-defined or unknown, by re-framing the problem in human-centric ways, creating many ideas in brainstorming sessions, and adopting a hands-on approach in prototyping and testing.

It is a tool that uses empathy as its core. **Empathy** is the first step in **design thinking** because it is a skill that allows us to understand and share the same feelings that others feel. Through **empathy**, we are able to put ourselves in other people's shoes and connect with how they might be feeling about their problem, circumstance, or situation

As per our experience, Design thinking is extremely useful when - facing a complex challenge. Design Thinking is a great method and mindset when dealing with complex challenges, where we do not fully understand the problem domain nor do we have a good solution at hand., when facing a human-centered challenge.

It values solutions over processes and creativity and innovation over traditions.

A workshop was organised with Confederation of Indian Industry , Young Indians in dec 2019 as a 2 day activity to introduce the entire community to the concept of Design Thinking. Students were encouraged to get a practical exposure to the methodology and mini sprints were conducted for them to get comfortable with the ethos of the same.



Based on this students were encouraged to define their problem statement for research projects in a 'How Might We format' , and also look at rapid low cost prototyping.

The practise is supported by the Biomedical team in enabling them with a tinkering lab. Where any coding is needed support is sought from volunteers from technology companies like ARM. The

prototypes are tested within the hospital ecosystem and then the primary person for whom the solution was designed is brought in and the process completed or refined if needed.

5. Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them:

The team formed was new to the concept of design thinking and hence took some time to understand how to initiate the project. Regular trainings had to be given. Since it is a detailed process, it took long time to go through all the steps of design thinking in a detailed manner and come up with solutions. A proper planning under the able guidance of experts through techniques like brainstorming helped overcome this problem.

Technical Feasibility: Check if the product is going to give achievable results. Make sure the resources or processes to be worthwhile during the process.

Unrealistic expectations: Sometimes students come up with unrealistic expectations, mentors and faculties to make sure students are going in right track. Ensure exact skill and mindset to find genuinely innovative solutions.

Lack of persistence: It is important to understand that a product innovation will take multiple iterations which can run for longer period of time than expected or calculated. Work towards each iteration at a time.

6. Impact of Best Practice

a. Tangible results

We have been able to create 3 devices that have achieved clinical application

1. Brightness acuity tester
2. Potential Acuity Meter
3. SCRS – Sankara Currency Recognition System

The process has removed the perceived limitation of lack of knowledge in technology from our students who are able to visualise and then prototype with the support available.

b. Intangible results

- Overall, students interest in innovation and trends like Ai has improved, as reported on the yearly student satisfaction survey.
- Competitive spirit among students increased to be creative in their research studies with collaboration and team work also taking a huge role.

- Faculty understood the challenges and the importance of ensuring curiosity & creativity is nurtured and tried to overcome those by encouraging the students more towards innovations.
- Students found an enjoyable way of learning and this created profound knowledge in Innovation as well.

7. Resources required :

- Faculty to coordinate & guide the design thinking challenges.
- The biomedical engineer team with faculty working together for prototype.
- Access to hardware & software that could help prototype faster
- A better understanding of intellectual property to help us with better protection of ideas.