RACMA
THE ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF MEDICAL ADMINISTRATORS

INTERESTING TREND CHANGES
2016 (November) – Day 1, Q1 (Compulsory)

Medical Leader	•
Medical Expert	✓
Communicator	✓
Advocate	
Scholar	
Professional	
Collaborator	•
Manager	•

You are the Deputy Director Medical Services at Royal ABC Hospital- a metropolitan tertiary public health service that services a large population that extends to suburban and regional areas. It employs 14,000 full and part time staff, including 6,000 nurses and 2,000 doctors. One of your key roles is to specifically manage junior doctors and support the Director of Medical Services in professional medical governance. You have only been in the job a couple of weeks and just getting to know the facility.

During the third week in the role, the Chief Financial Officer pops his head in the door and asks if you could attend an urgent emergency meeting of the executive in the Boardroom. You walk in, and see the Executive Team all seated around with concerned faces, and the Chief Executive not looking happy. The Director of Medical Services (DMS) is nowhere to be seen (you understand that he is off sick with the flu).

The Chief Finance Officer displays some graphs in PowerPoint (Graphs 1, 2 and 3 below) and starts talking about the fact that staff costs are a concern especially for nursing and medical EFT. The hospital budget is in trouble, and the Royal ABC Board is very concerned. With the DMS being absent, the Chief Executive (CE) tells you that you need to help fix this, and she appoints you as the project lead of a team to address medical locum and nursing agency costs. She wants you to come up with an interim report on a possible action plan for next week, which must include actions to specifically reduce these costs to help bring the health service budget back on track.
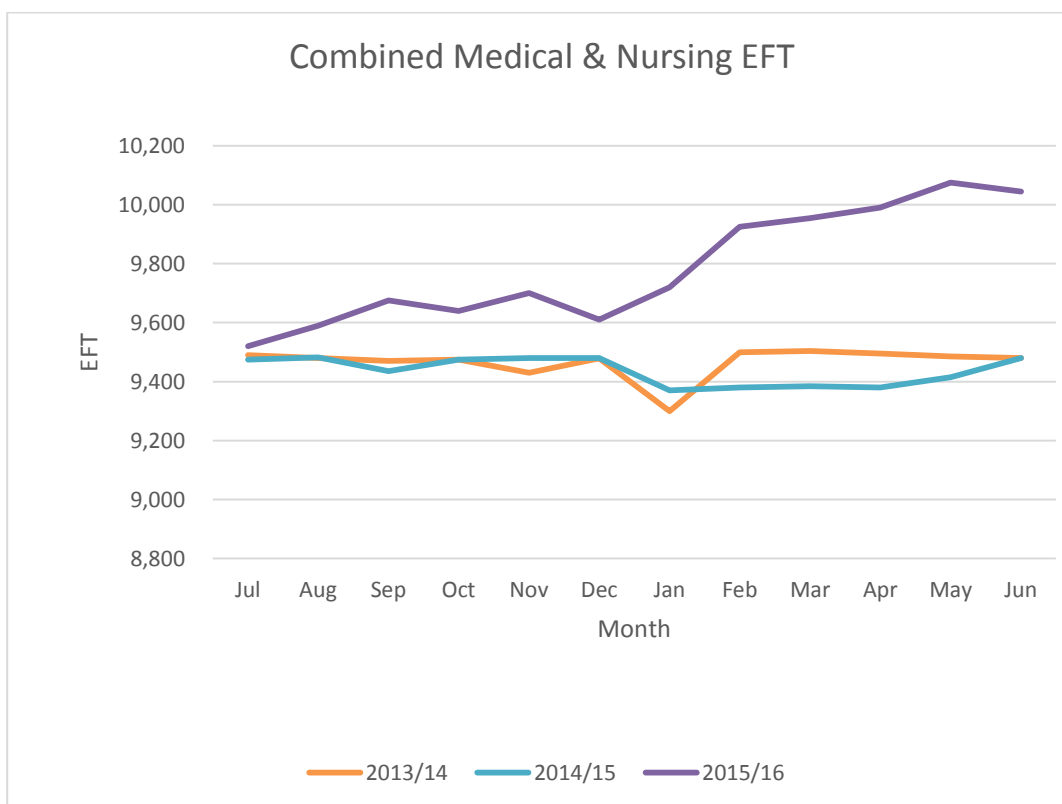
Questions:

1. What does your initial analysis of the graphical data indicate? What trends may be evident?

2. What are your initial thoughts as to why the trends (if any) may have occurred?
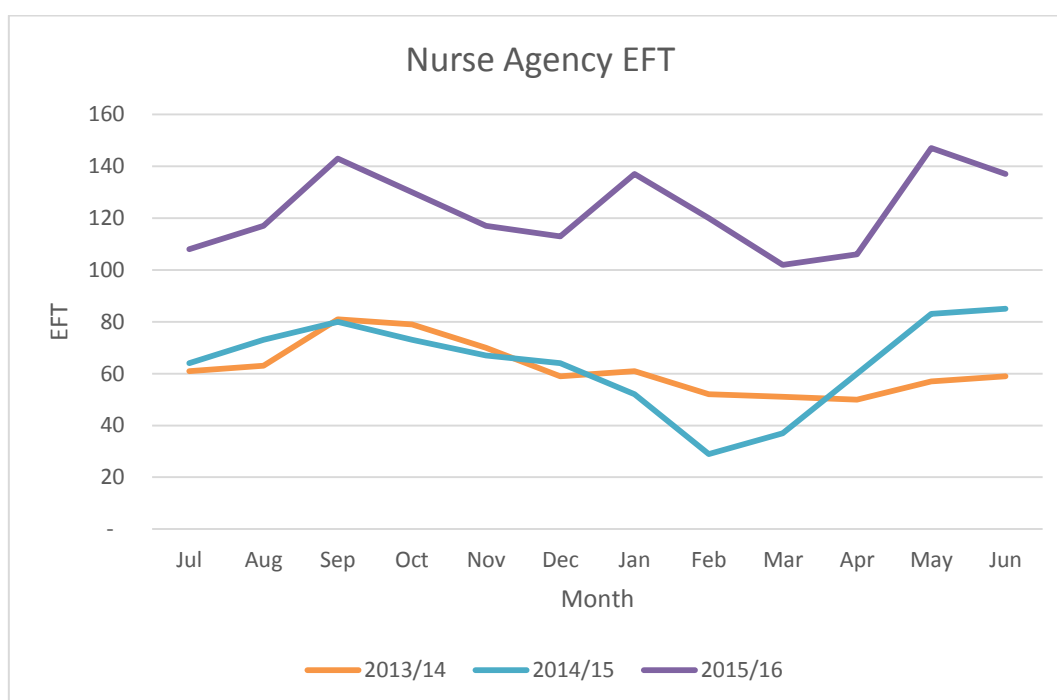
   Before developing your interim action plan for the CE,

3. What other information / data might you try to gather over the next week? and

4. What are some of the possible actions you initially believe will need to be considered?
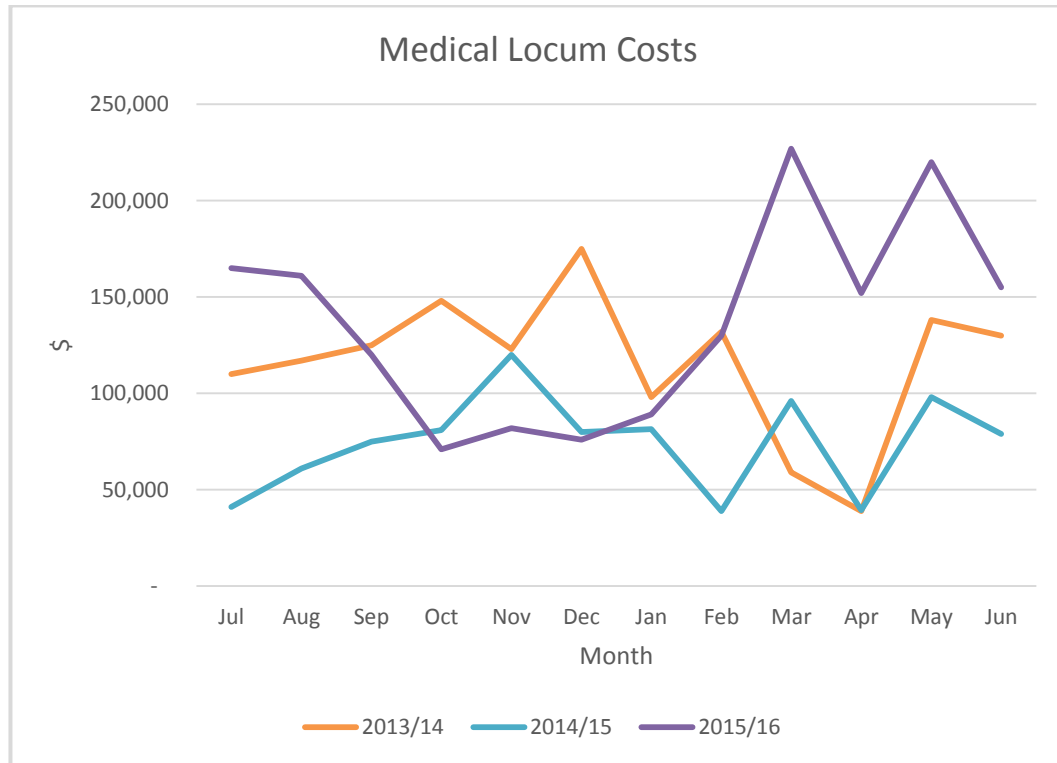
Graph 1: Royal ABC Hospital Staff EFT

Combined Medical & Nursing EFT

Legend: 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16

Graph 2: Royal ABC Hospital Nurse Agency EFT

Nurse Agency EFT

Legend: 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16

Graph 3: Royal ABC Hospital Medical Locum costs

CENSOR NOTES

This is essentially a question to test the candidate's ability to quickly look at data, appreciate trends that are initially obvious in some reports, and then realise that additional information is needed to understand the full situation. The candidate should be able to indicate what additional data elements would be required.

This question also includes questions about preparing plans for possible action. Most importantly the candidate should realise that one element involves nursing and therefore there must be some comment about how collaboration would occur with nursing administration colleagues.

The candidate should also be aware that this scenario is about a problem that has occurred over a period of time and is not a 'one of' occurrence, and that the executive of the hospital should have been aware of these trends and managing them over time. The candidate should be aware that the trends may have occurred for appropriate reasons (e.g. new services opening, industrial agreement changes) or inappropriate reasons (e.g. poor management of staff resources) and there may have been more recent events (e.g. budget reduction, industrial issues, poor patient outcomes) that have caused the hospital to be concerned about costs.

Specifically, the following should be covered in the answers to the four questions.

Question 1:

The candidate should be able to indicate: - Graph1 shows that Med and Nursing EFT were relatively static for the preceding two financial years but an increase has occurred from July 2015 with a large jump in Jan-Feb 2016 that has just started to plateau out.

Graph 2 shows that nurse agency EFT were reasonably static for the preceding two financial years although an increase started in Apr – May last financial year and this has been sustained for all of 2015/16 with some seasonal variation.

Graph 3 shows that medical locum costs do vary on a monthly basis and the variance has not been as significant until July 2015 when there was an initial jump but this settled until there was a large jump in March 2016 that has continued to remain high but is fluctuating.

Question 2:

The candidate should be able to indicate that the three graphs do not give a complete picture and that additional data is needed. (To be covered in Question 3 answers). There has been an increase of medical and nursing staff of around 400 EFT over the last financial year. The increase in nursing agency could account for about 60 of the extra EFT. The data for medical locums is not as useful (need actual numbers). The data shows that the average cost has been about the same over a whole year.

There should be some discussion of possible causes. Legitimate causes: - the hospital may have opened new services; may have had to have taken on staff for industrial reasons or clinical service needs. Inappropriate causes:- divisional and department heads may not have been managing staff numbers appropriately; the hospital may have had a significant dip in its clinical standing and staff no longer want to work there- hence extra locum – agency needs.

Question 3:

The candidate should indicate that many other data reports would be needed to give a complete picture. They should also indicate that they need to review the history of hospital activity over the last two years to see if any significant events occurred. They would also need to understand the hospital's policies and procedures relating to staff number management and whether they were being followed in the hospital.

Better performing candidates should also be able to indicate that some trends have been occurring over time and that existing management (including the DMS) should have been aware of them and taking action (unless they were legitimately required).

Question 4:

There is a need to realise that this is most likely to be a complex issue to plan and only core principles / proposals could be developed in a one week timeframe. There must be good collaboration with all divisional heads to get the necessary data and to consider possible actions. The plans will be influenced by i) whether the trends occurred for appropriate or inappropriate reasons, and ii) what has been the trigger for the CE to demand action at this time.

The attached marking matrix indicates what would be required for a pass mark and the points that better performing candidates would mention.

Score:		Knowledge Knows what to do	Skills Knows how to do	Attitude/Behaviour Shows s/he knows the consequences, leadership responsibility
Poor	**1**	Candidate does not demonstrate any reasoned approach to the data analysis.	Candidate does not indicate that they would be able to gather the extra data that is required or understand the issues relating to collaborative work with other senior hospital staff.	Does not demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the task that is being requested and how it will impact on key individuals or the Hospital as a whole.
Limited	**2**	Only demonstrates a limited understanding of the data and the issues with or without prompting. No formal logic to the analysis.	Does not indicate with, or without, prompting that they have the skills to do more than the basic element of what is required	Demonstrates some very basic understanding of the significance of the task that is being requested and how it will impact on the staff and the Hospital as a whole.
Borderline	**2.5**	In the answers to all 4 questions, provides most of the basic knowledge elements that are required but even with, or without, prompting still misses one or two issues that would impede a successful completion of the task.	Provides some reasonable evidence that they have, or know of, the skills to manage some of the more significant tasks but miss one or two elements that would be needed to successfully undertake the tasks in a real life situation.	Demonstrates with, or without, prompting more than a basic understanding of the significance of most issues but fails to understand one or two significant issues that will cause the task to be unsuccessful or create unnecessary problems for the Hospital.
Meets standard	**3**	Provides sufficient information that they understand the contents of the data and its limitations. Demonstrates that relevant history and further data must be collected and collaboration must occur with other hospital executives.	Provides sufficient information that they could gather the extra data and history that what could be reasonably be expected in a one week timeframe. The plan should be in concept mode rather than minute detail as that would not be possible.	Indicates that they understand the need to work with other hospital staff and the sensitivities that may be required if there have been inappropriate actions by senior staff. Appreciates that any initial proposed actions will have to be correctly developed and what some of the consequences could be for the hospital internally and externally.

Good	**4**	In addition to providing the basic answers to all four questions, the candidate demonstrates that there is a very clear logic to the analysis that can occur now and over the next week, the implications of different scenarios, and what how the structure of a good plan of action could be developed.	As well as demonstrating they have the skills and/or understand the skills that are required to manage the core elements of this task, the candidate can demonstrate how they would work with other hospital executives and a clear understanding of what could reasonably occur in one week.	Demonstrates they know of all the basic issues required for a pass but in addition, clearly articulated the impact on all internal and external hospital stakeholders.
Outstanding	**5**	Candidate demonstrates an exceptional understanding of the limited data that is provided and all of the extra activities that would be required.	Demonstrates that they have, or understand, all of the skills that are required to effectively manage the complexities that this type of scenario presents.	Demonstrates that they clearly understand and could manage all of the interrelated complexities that could arise in planning to manage a scenario like this.