

The use of Clinical Simulation to support development of interprofessional communication skills and understanding –

Perspectives from Physician Associates

Jessica Plail – Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust Lead PA; Physician Associate Ambassador Kent, Surrey and Sussex

Sarah Vigor - Physician Associate Lead Kent & Medway Primary Care Training Hub; Physician Associate Ambassador Kent, Surrey and Sussex

Aim:

For Physician Associates (PAs) to understand the impact of their communication skills as part of a wider multi-disciplinary team (MDT) as they follow a patient's journey through the healthcare system in the simulation setting.

Background:

PAs work as part of the MDT across the healthcare system. The PA role continues to grow with the number of new PAs expected to exceed 10,000 in the next 5 years (1).

Having good communication skills is key for all healthcare professionals to optimise collaborative interprofessional working and ensure positive patient outcomes. Poor communication has been shown to negatively impact patient outcomes (2). Simulation provides a safe space for collaborative education of such skills as well as promotes reflection and discussion.

Method:

Two interprofessional simulation education days were developed by the Kent Surrey and Sussex (KSS) PA Ambassadors (PAAs) in collaboration with Medway Maritime Hospital simulation team and the KSS GP Fellow and Simulation Lead.

Four scenarios (primary care waiting room; ED resus; inpatient ward; follow up in primary care) were run following a patient's journey. The scenario was a patient with learning difficulties who presented with collapse in the GP waiting room. An actor with learning difficulties played the role of the patient.

Delegates comprised PAs, Doctors and Paramedics. Faculty included PAAs, SIM team and a Learning Disability Nurse Lead.

Delegates were involved in scenarios which reflected their day to day work place. Non participating delegates observed from a separate room via audio and TV link.

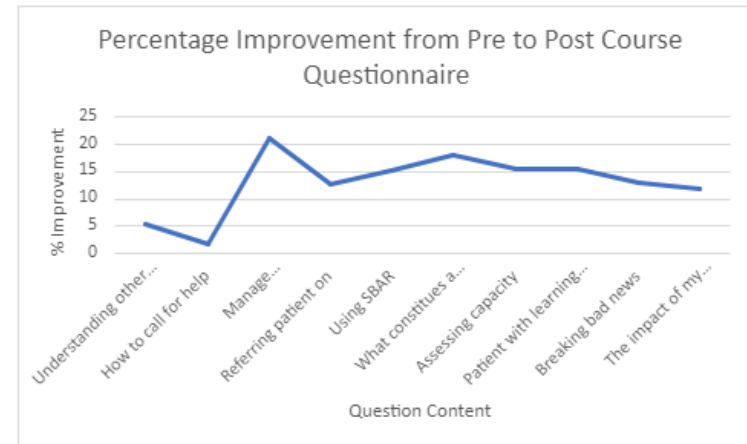
Faculty facilitated a full debrief to all delegates after each scenario.

Delegate feedback comprised of pre and post simulation questionnaires assessing communication skills and knowledge of roles within the wider MDT.

References:

1. NHS Long-term Workforce Plan; June 2023
2. Brock, D., But-Rish, E., Chiu, C-R., Hammer, D., Wilson, S., Vorvick, L., Blondon, K., Schaad, D., Liner, D., Zierler, B., Interprofessional education in team communication: working together to improve patient safety. Postgraduate Medical Journal, Volume 89, Issue 1057, November 2013.

Results:



Delegates demonstrated an improvement in confidence levels across all areas with the most significant increase of 21% in question 3; *'I feel confident to manage a deteriorating patient'*.

Conclusion and Discussion:

45% of delegates rated themselves at a confidence level of 4 or below in at least one of the question on the pre course questionnaire. 100% of delegates rated themselves at confidence level 5 and above in all questions in the post course questionnaire indicating the course achieved the aim to improve delegate confidence in communication skills.

The question with the greatest improvement was questions number 3 *'I feel confident to manage a deteriorating patient'*, where there was an overall improvement of 21%.

Overall, there was improvement in confidence for each question. However, for 6 out of 10 pre course questions up to 4 delegates had rated themselves at confidence level 10 indicating there was little room for improvement. Therefore, these areas of the course may not have been beneficial to these participants.

Limitations included a small sample size of only 20 delegates. Of these 20 delegates not everyone completed all the questions on the questionnaire which will have an impact on the overall results. We were unable to separate these delegates forms as the questionnaires were anonymised.

Some delegates felt that adding clinical skills into the scenarios would enhance the training experience.