

Introduction

Clinical Teaching Physician Associates (CTPAs) have been deployed at the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust (RWT) as part of the Undergraduate Medical Education Academy (UMEA) since 2021. The role, a first of its kind at the time, was modelled on the Clinical Teaching Fellow (CTF) role to provide teaching and pastoral support for PA students and to offer additional support for medical student education (Fig 1).

CTPAs have a clinical attachment to maintain and develop their clinical practice. They are expected to undertake a teaching qualification and demonstrate and develop the professional and educational standards for Advance Higher Education ('AdvanceHE') recognition. CTPAs deliver teaching aligned to their own competency and clinical experience and do this in a variety of settings including classroom, simulation and bedside.

Methodology

Student feedback was collected at the end of clinical placements in mid-2022 by anonymous questionnaire comprised of Likert scale, numbered scale, closed and open-ended response. Teaching format included lectures, small group teaching and bedside provided by 3 CTPAs. Respondents included 17 fourth- and fifth-year medical students and 12 PA students. Anonymous feedback was collected by questionnaire from CTF team members at the end of the 2021-22 academic year (seven respondents; 78% response rate).

Results

- 82% of students rated CTPA teaching delivery as 'excellent' (10-point numbered scale, 1= very poor, 10= excellent)
- All students felt that teaching delivered was appropriate for their stage of training and aligned with their learning needs (5-point Likert, 29 responded 'strongly agree')
- 96% reported improved confidence with the content covered
- 28 of 29 students reported they would attend future CTPA-led sessions
- Students appreciated the approachable and non-judgemental teaching style and no criticisms of the role were raised
- All CTF respondents felt that CTPAs made a unique contribution to PA student teaching, education and pastoral support
- The majority CTFs felt CTPAs offered high-quality teaching and learning to students
- The majority of CTFs reported a lack of awareness of PA training, curriculum content and assessment
- Limitations of the role noted by CTFs included the delivery of practical prescribing teaching as these skills currently fall outside the scope of qualified PA practice
- CTFs did not identify any significant challenges working with CTPAs

'Excellent teaching from all the CTPAs...everything taught was very relevant for us, and I couldn't have asked for a better experience with the teaching aspect!' First year PA student

'I have thoroughly enjoyed working with our CTPAs this year...they have contributed across the board to medical student and physician associate teaching and demonstrated excellent clinical knowledge and a genuine flair for teaching. Medical students who have received teaching from the CTPAs have spoken very highly of them and see them as an equal member of the team' Clinical Teaching Fellow

Implications & Conclusion

The main limitation of this study was a small student sample size derived from one academic year with no 3rd year medical students represented, nonetheless, positive themes emerged. Student feedback suggested CTPA-led teaching was acceptable to both PA and medical students, had a meaningful impact on reported confidence, was delivered at an appropriate level and was valued by learners from both disciplines. CTF feedback indicates CTPAs are felt to deliver high-quality teaching and learning and enrich the existing UMEA team, especially in teaching and pastoral support of PA students. This data highlights the utility and unique value of the CTPA to further enhance a teaching team.

Future Direction

A larger sample size of student feedback will be forthcoming from our team. Further studies of acceptability and role perception are warranted, particularly considering recent controversy around the PA role that this data may not have captured. Studies should also aim to identify the impact of CTPAs on PA student placement satisfaction, learner experience and achievement. Broadly, UMEA has seen greater continuity between CTF intakes, increased teaching provision to growing student numbers, established stronger links with clinical departments and higher education institutions and has experienced a more stable long-term service development - these aspects also deserve further study.

Acknowledgements & Declaration

Adam Ryder (Group Trust PA Lead, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust & Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust)

IW (author) is employed as a CTPA

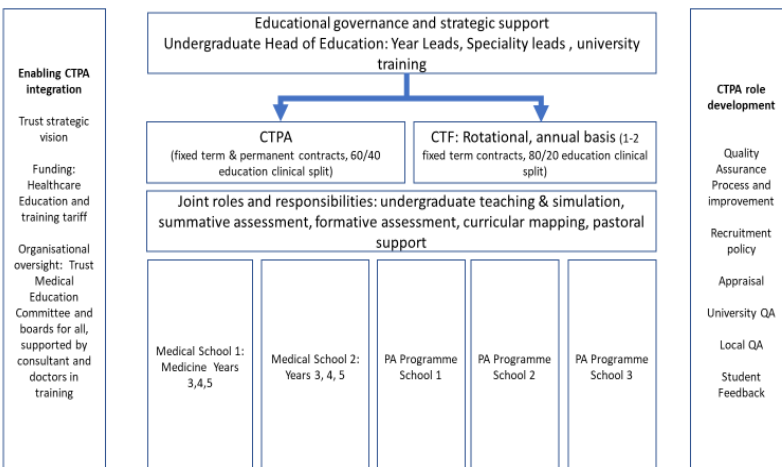


Fig 1. Implementation & integration of the CTPA role at RWH

Aims

- To examine the acceptability and impact of the CTPA teaching in PA and medical student cohorts
- To explore the perception of the role in CTFs within UMEA