

**Simulated Physiotherapy Placement: An alternative to clinical placement for first year undergraduate Physiotherapy students**

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Simulated Physiotherapy Placement: An alternative to clinical placement for first year undergraduate Physiotherapy students.

#### Background and Aims:

To address the existing workforce deficit within Physiotherapy an extra 500 Physiotherapists need to be trained every year - an additional 15% of current student numbers. The biggest barriers to expansion of student numbers is placement capacity. Novel and innovative models of placement are being trialled, with a strong emphasis on the four pillars of clinical practice. Simulation, and virtual based placements offer alternative models of placement provision (1). Current literature has detailed successful simulated clinical placement within Physiotherapy using full or partial substitution of clinical placement. It has been demonstrated that switching up to 25% of practice learning to a simulated model does not compromise student attainment or competency (2). However, these studies tend to involve small student numbers. For simulated placements to be a viable alternative they need to be delivered at scale.

The aim of this pilot project was to develop, deliver and evaluate an on campus simulated placement experience for 140 first year Physiotherapy students at a large UK university.

#### Activity:

A four week program of activities was designed to simulate the core learning that occurs on a typical physiotherapy clinical placement. Including case scenarios with standardised patients, virtual case discussions with clinicians, expert patient panel, day in the life of videos, note writing workshops and live streaming of patient sessions. Students attended two observational days in practice with structured debriefing on campus. Themes for the placement included communication, risk assessment, patient journeys, wellness and effective learning on placement. The development of the learning activities was research and

stakeholder informed. Clinical scenarios were co-designed with level 5 Physiotherapy students .

#### Results/findings:

Placement evaluation was collected via a questionnaire including open ended questions and likert scales (0-5). Students agreed that that placement was engaging and interesting (mean score of 3.45), with the greatest agreement that the placement had improved note writing, communication and understanding of professionalism. Students ranked simulated clinical scenarios and observation as their preference for activity, with peer learning to support these activities to be ranked the lowest

A review of placement attainment data noted a correlation with previous clinical placement data. There was an increase in a student's perception of their preparedness to go on a clinical placement pre and post simulated placement.

#### Conclusion:

Large scale, simulated on campus placements are viable and a useful learning experience for first year Physiotherapy students.

1. Twogood R, Hares E, Wyatt M, Cuff A. Rapid implementation and improvement of a virtual student placement model in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. BMJ open quality. 2020 Nov 1;9(4):e001107.

2. Wright A, Moss P, Dennis DM, Harrold M, Levy S, Furness AL, Reubenson A. The influence of a full-time, immersive simulation-based clinical placement on physiotherapy student confidence during the transition to clinical practice. Advances in simulation. 2018 Dec;3(1):1-0.