

Co-production of Pre-clinical Simulation Based Education (SBE) from Diagnostic Radiography students' Diaries of First Clinical Placement

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Co-production of Pre-clinical Simulation Based Education (SBE) from Diagnostic Radiography students' Diaries of First Clinical Placement

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Conflicts of interest: All of the Research team are in the employ of Sheffield Hallam University, and all participants are current (2026) undergraduate students at the same institution. No other financial or commercial relationships are present

Background

A vital part of the education and training of Healthcare Professionals is hands-on clinical experience in a relevant department, typically called "clinical placement". As part of their training Diagnostic Radiography (DRAD) students undertake placement in imaging departments throughout the duration of their course. In these departments Student Radiographers perform imaging and care procedures for real patients while under supervision and guidance of qualified staff.

DRAD students are recommended to undertake a pre-course clinical visit to "smell the smells and hear the noises" of a department, however post-pandemic access to these visits has been limited.^(1,2) As such, clinical placement may be students' first ever experience of a clinical department.

The transition into clinical placement has been highlighted in increasing attrition rates and delaying professional development, due to feelings of unpreparedness and challenges of clinical working.^(3,4)

Methods

We aimed to co-produce our pre-placement training and SBE by reviewing experiences that students see as significant during their first clinical placement. By having students complete weekly diary entries, we sought to identify common themes that can be integrated to pre-placement education. Co-production is a useful approach to undertake where learners are experiencing new experiences, to help empower them and give them a voice.⁽⁵⁾

The Diary method of collecting qualitative data allows a contemporaneous longitudinal record of participants' subjective experiences and prioritisation of what stands out as significant or memorable to them, while minimising researcher influence. Retrospective records may cause participants to re-evaluate, dismiss or forget events that were previously seen as noteworthy.^(6,7)

Ethical approval was granted by the host institution. Qualtrics was used to record entries, and each participant was issued with a unique randomly generated ID for anonymity and asked to log at least 1 entry per week of their placement block.

Results

All participants (n=6) completed at least 1 entry per week for 4 weeks of placement (27 entries in total). Through thematic analysis, the key themes identified were Practicalities, Personal growth, Unfamiliarity, and Professional interactions. Students found gradual immersion with proactive support from staff and L6 students helped their transition into the role.

Many reported anxiety about potential situations such as interactions with patients and requesting assistance from staff, with reports of this passing once the participant had experienced these situations. Another recurrent theme was struggling with the PebblePad logbook for recording events and feedback.

Some participants reported negative interactions with patients and staff, but showed evidence of reflection and growth from these rather than discouragement. The busyness and frantic nature of departments was also recorded as unexpected or stressful by participants

These themes will be used to guide redesigns in the SBE sessions that run before Placement commences for future L4 cohorts, focussing on interpersonal interactions, dealing with rapid environments, and recording feedback on the PebblePad platform.

Further SBE sessions later in the academic year will build on these and provide evidence of progress and development from clinical experience.

Themes/Subthemes

Practicalities

- Missed opportunities
- Familiarisation and transition
- Assessment and feedback recording

Unfamiliarity

- Practicalities of role
- Variation from taught practice
- Guided experiences
- Busyness of departments

Personal Growth

- Awareness of own knowledge and growth
- Feedback and learning from events
- Release of anxiety around unknown

Professional Interactions

- Variation in staff attitudes and teaching
- Patient interactions
- Acknowledgement of inexperience
- Mentoring and guidance

Conclusions

SBE is widely used to help transition students into clinical practice, by allowing them to practice skills and experiment in a zero consequence environment. Student experiences and feedback can help educators co-produce sessions to address where students wish to gain experience and practice.

However, where students are entering an entirely unfamiliar environment, Diary records are a powerful tool to identify and contextualise aspects that students find significant, while minimising educator experiences from biasing responses. This method highlights lived experiences of students as well as their own feelings and perceptions around events and situations, and can guide scaffolding of SBE to ease their transition to placement.⁽⁸⁾

Notes

This posters' font is Atkinson Hyperlegible, designed for ease of reading for low vision readers.⁽⁹⁾ The colour palette was selected for colour blindness contrast via Coolors.⁽¹⁰⁾

