

PRESENTATION 4

The (Future) Doctor Will See You Now: Piloting a Longitudinal Virtual Patient in Medical Education, Simulating General Practice

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Background

Virtual patients provide numerous learning opportunities for medical students, yet only support one-off patient interactions. In order to emulate general practice, allowing for multiple encounters with a single patient, we developed a new longitudinal virtual patient (LVP).

Methods

Our LVP was integrated into 2nd year at a graduate-entry medical school, in the 2019/2020 academic year. Students were asked about their prior experience and expectations of LVPs, before they engaged with two consultations and one results session. Data were collected from this survey and from the engagement with the LVP. Feedback was collected and thematically grouped.

Results

120 students responded to the survey. 1.7% had previous experience with virtual patients, with the majority of students expecting the LVP to make a difference to their clinical reasoning. 142 students had engaged with the LVP, with 53% having completed over 75% of the work. Informal feedback arose around accessibility, professional learning and development, and engagement with the LVP module.

Discussion

Our data indicate that LVPs are agreeable to medical students, with good engagement and positive reports of clinical learning.

Conclusion

Future evaluation of this work, exploring reasons of engagement or lack of, will support refinement of the LVP to accommodate the learning needs of the medical students.

Key messages

Students in graduate-entry medicine often have little experience with virtual patients. LVPs aimed to emulate general practice are well received in medical education, offering additional learning resources. Students valued the learning from the LVP, with feedback recommending minor changes for future academic years.

