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DEVELOPING UNDERGRADUATE PHYSIOTHERAPY SKILLS IN ASSESSING THE ACUTELY ILL PATIENT USING HIGH FIDELITY SIMULATION

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Background It is essential for physiotherapy students approaching qualification to be confident to use a structured framework for assessing acutely ill patients. Previously, teaching this structured assessment was delivered in a classroom setting. Students may have also gained clinical experience of using a framework on clinical placement. Allowing students to practice using the framework in high fidelity simulation scenarios was considered to be a safe and realistic learning environment.

Summary of work 13 students completed 6 simulated scenarios, supported by facilitated debriefs with a multi-professional faculty. A brief was constructed to simulate a physiotherapy referral, followed by a 15-minute practical simulation and a 40-minute facilitated debrief.

Data collection was performed in 4 phases. Phase 1 before teaching and placement, Phase 2 before simulation, Phase 3 after simulation and Phase 4 a focus group (2 weeks post simulation). Students were asked to rate their self-confidence using a 5-point Likert Scale in relation to 11 statements. Students were also given the opportunity to give free text responses. A focus group explored their views of using a simulation as a learning opportunity, the scenario content and recommendations for future development.

Summary of results Comparison of data between Phase 1 and 2 suggested traditional teaching methods did not generate improvements in students’ self-reported confidence in the clinical management of acutely ill patients. In contrast, comparison of data between Phase 1 and Phase 3 showed significant improvement in students’ self-reported confidence. This positive impact was most notable in relation to the students’ knowledge of their role in assessing the patient (+43.6%), making management recommendations (+45.7%) and their clinical reasoning (+47.1%). The quantitative data strongly supported the qualitative data from Phases 3 and 4. Students described the benefits further simulation experience would bring throughout their course for both physiotherapy specific and inter-professional learning.

Discussion and conclusions The addition of simulation training to the traditional education programme increased students’ self-reported confidence. Further follow up data is required to explore the potential for confidence decay. Students identified the benefits simulation could bring to their learning at all stages in their course within both a single and inter-professional context. Further work is needed to investigate the feasibility of scaling up student physiotherapy simulation training and the use of inter-professional simulation scenarios to assess and manage acutely ill patients.