

"IMAGINATION & INTEREST" *

Pilot Simulation-based educational event for healthcare staff on the new Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

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Introduction

The Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (MCA) is new legislation, fusing mental capacity and mental health law for those aged over 16 in Northern Ireland. Phased implementation of the Act commenced in December 2019, beginning with the new statutory framework in relation to deprivation of liberty safeguards (DoLS). We explored the use of multidisciplinary simulation based education (SBE) to improve awareness, and confidence in use, of this legislation.

Method

Two scenarios were designed by clinicians in collaboration with a specialist in simulation research. Scenarios focused on assessment of the patient's capacity to consent to (1) a medical admission (in the context of acute alcohol withdrawal) and (2) care arrangements upon discharge, both of which would amount to a deprivation of liberty. The SBE event was piloted in three clinical environments with 42 participants across a range of healthcare disciplines.

A specialist in SBE for health and social care undertook the role of simulated participant, and the scenarios were performed with volunteers undertaking their usual clinical roles. Following this, participants simulated completion of the statutory forms and debrief was led by the facilitators.

Paired pre- and post- simulation questionnaires with 5-point Likert scales were completed. Unique participant-generated identification codes maintained anonymity. Quantitative data was analysed for statistical significance with Paired Samples T-Test, and sensitivity analysis with two-tailed Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests.

Results

I am aware of what the DOL component of the MCA will mean for my patients.

I am aware of how the DOL component of the MCA will affect my work day to day.

I am aware of the conditions for a DOL as laid out in the MCA.

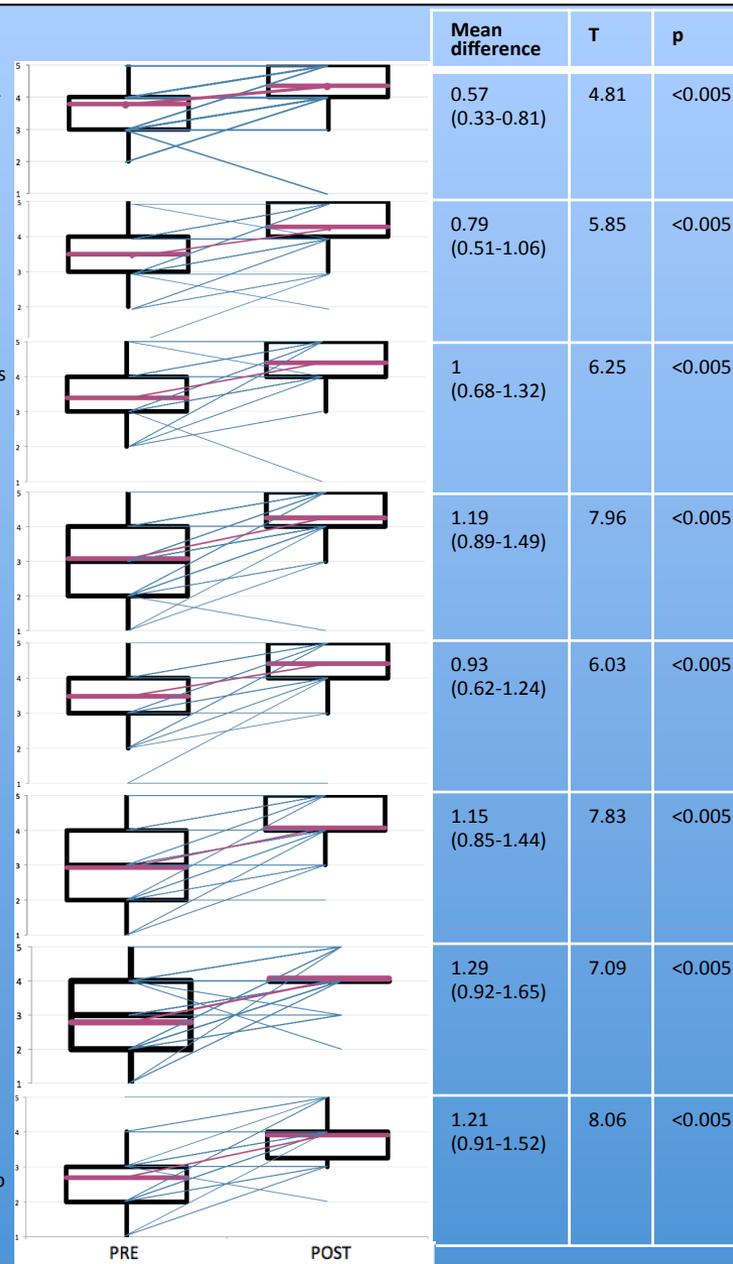
I am aware of the different processes for a Short Term versus a Long Term DOL.

I am aware of the legal test for capacity.

I am confident that I could assess capacity to decide upon a DOL.

I am confident that I know what forms I should be able to complete for patients subject to DOLS.

I am confident that I could complete the necessary forms for patients subject to DOLS.



Discussion

Existing mechanisms to train staff in the MCA address theories of capacity assessment. This pilot demonstrates the role of SBE in improving the confidence of healthcare workers in executing these clinical duties. The utility of this method, whereby healthcare staff can practice skills in the assessment of capacity in the supervised and psychologically safe learning environment provided through SBE, is demonstrated with statistically significant improvements across all domains of the questionnaire following participants' involvement in, or observation of, the simulation and post-simulation debrief.

The development of this SBE event pioneers the use of high-fidelity simulation with scenarios designed collaboratively between clinicians and a specialist in simulation research to provide participants with a high-fidelity environment for learning. This partnership should be continued, replicated and developed further to enhance the role of SBE in healthcare settings, and enable wider participation through scaled-up training. Development should include training healthcare staff, involved in health professional education, in behavioural skills, which would equip educators with the necessary skills to perform as patients, and enrich the learning experience for those attending SBE events.

Conclusion

This pilot demonstrates that SBE is beneficial in training healthcare staff in the DoLS component of the MCA, and ought to be considered as part of future training.

* "Where my reason, imagination or interest were not engaged, I would not or I could not learn." (Winston Churchill)