A Quality Improvement Project (QIP) focused on transitioning the Northwest Learning Disability (NWLD) Academic Regional Teaching Forum to a virtual programme during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges in delivering medical education due to restrictions in face-to-face meetings and clinicians were concerned about the impact upon accessibility and the quality of medical education.

In May 2020, the author became lead organiser of the North West Learning Disability Academic monthly teaching forum, an educational academic forum for ID psychiatrists in the NW region. The NWLD forum switched to the online platform, Zoom, to ensure that teaching continued throughout the pandemic.

Aims and Hypothesis

Primary objective

The primary aim of QIP aimed to transition face-to-face teaching to an online format and promote innovative practices in delivering teaching. The primary objective is to establish a virtual educational forum which is efficient, safe and reproducible.

Secondary objective

Secondary objectives included organising educational sessions which achieve ID curriculum competencies, improving member engagement and also the quality of ID training in the NW region.

Method

A ‘think-group’ consisting of the previous NWLD forum lead, ID training programme director and higher trainee facilitators proposed ideas towards a varied educational topic bank, in line with the ID curriculum.

The plan-do-study-act cycle (PDSA) was initiated in June 2020

- Workshops evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on the educational landscape were conducted

PDSA-1 June 2020-June 2021

- Qualitative feedback from the forum members collected at baseline and regular intervals, in the form of monthly forum feedback forms
- A standardised questionnaire was created, which collated feedback on the forum organisation, training provision and identifying unmet needs which could be addressed.

The first baseline was carried out in May 2020.

PDSA-1 June 2020-June 2021-RESULT-

- Qualitative Assessment Common themes:
  - Space: NWLD members valued a protected, structured, safe space for virtual academic meeting during COVID pandemic
  - Sharing and learning: NWLD members appreciated thinking about patients, discussing common experiences and learning from each other.
  - Impacts on attitudes: knowledge and confidence for new trainees and trainers joining during pandemic for sharing practices as ID clinicians to become part of wider community was appreciated

- Monthly feedback forms

- Recruiting and Retaining in ID NW region
- To promote a social networking during COVID-19
- To ensure information sharing in among ID forum members regarding innovations and interventions related to Quality Improvement
- To introduce workshops to understand the impact of COVID-19

ZOOM online forum was created for all members across the NW regions and members were contacted by email to arrange monthly, virtual meetings and complete feedback forms. A standardisation questionnaire was created, which collated feedback on the forum organisation, training provision and identifying unmet needs which could be addressed.

Positive Feedback-Examples

- Reminder emails with all the required information. Very smooth transition between topics. Well on time. Great job.

- Made me feel welcomed on my first day. Explanation of each step and made the event run very smoothly, prompting interaction without feeling “on spot” which is a very difficult balance, very friendly and approachable.

- Very informative and engaging sessions.

- Points of Improvement –Examples

  - Could there be any mentoring for the core trainees who are interested to join ID in ST....

  - Reminder: Email including feedback forms and links for the reflection on the day.

Limitation:

- Audience participation and engagement remains a concern in first part of the cycle and has improved over the process

Future Directions

- New themes will emerge as more data are analysed in second PDSA

- Second phase of data collection in the form of monthly qualitative feedback is ongoing and will help in generating effective themes

Conclusions

- The NWLD forum has successfully continued during the pandemic, without any breaks.

- Initial qualitative feedback has shown that NWLD forum has helped meet educational needs and improved social interaction during the pandemic, as well as attitudes towards the forum.

- This work suggests that an-depth analysis of the feedback can facilitate a targeted approach that improvemproving feedback methodology to improve access to feedback – Aspects particularly praised were the ability to teach in a safe environment, expanding on topics outside the normal curriculum, and gaining feedback as a learner.

- Current evaluation – long-term impact of the NWLD forum on recruitment and psychiatry knowledge the quality of training and education.

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References