

Virtual simulation training for third year medical students in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

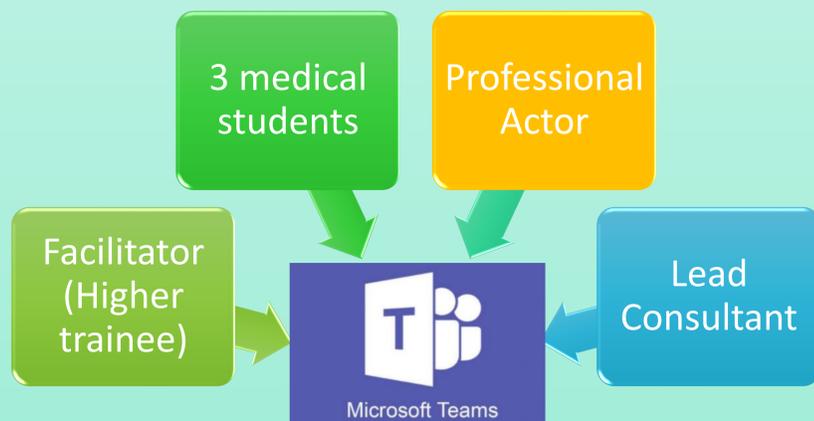
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Background and Aim

The COVID pandemic significantly restricted face to face clinical opportunities for medical students. We aimed to create and deliver a novel virtual simulated patient interaction for 3rd year medical students in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Our intervention provided core-curriculum learning opportunities around psychopathology and developed students' communication skills. Two higher trainees led the planning and co-ordination.

Methods

We developed a 3-hour simulation-based CAMHS training session, delivered by Microsoft Teams to 3 medical students per week for 10 weeks.



Learning Objectives of the session:

- To acquire clinical knowledge that is relevant to the scenarios used
- To experience taking a mental health history, performing a Mental State Examination and a risk assessment in CAMHS
- To develop and reflect on skills in communicating with children and adolescents in the context of CAMHS

Structure of the session:

- One actor played the same adolescent with mental health problems, presenting on three separate occasions
- Each student was allocated to one scenario



Resources:

- The actor was sent the 3 scenarios with a detailed patient history, but interactions were unscripted
- Medical students were sent instructions and introductory CAMHS notes prior to the session
- The consultant was sent facilitators notes with instructions for the structure of the session
- Medical students were asked to complete online feedback following their session

Results

29 students attended the virtual sessions; out of which 17 completed feedback (58.6%)

94% "really enjoyed" the session

"Thank you so much. Please do this again, it has been the highlight of my placement thus far."

"The session was ran (sic) very well and it flowed very smoothly"

"It felt like a very safe space to make mistakes and try out new things"

88% found the session "really useful"

"It is a really valuable experience to get to take a history from a young patient, especially as we have only had minimal clinical experience in our first 2 years in medical school"

"...the relaxed nature of the session ...made the environment much more friendly and less overwhelming."

"This session was very beneficial to my learning...almost a trial run for when you will be talking to real patients"

Conclusions

- This was a novel teaching programme, delivered in response to COVID restrictions
- The intervention was well received by students, actors and consultants
- Free-text feedback was almost entirely positive with a focus on the positive learning environment
- Virtual delivery saved on time, travel and expenses
- Students said the learning environment felt supportive and the level of information was appropriate
- Individual debriefing and feedback were invaluable
- A clear structure to the sessions is essential, in particular with facilitators keeping time
- Students gained experience of conducting virtual consultations that are likely to continue post pandemic