

Implementing a Simulation Training Program for Physician Associates

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Introduction: Physician Associates (PAs) are a relatively new but rapidly growing workforce in the NHS that contribute to medical interdisciplinary team. Following graduation, there is little postgraduate training available. Simulation training has proven invaluable in other medical profession and has shown to improve clinical and none clinical skills in real practice. We aimed to develop, implement and evaluate a simulation training program for PAs based on a program used with junior doctors in NHS Lothian.

Methods

We designed a simulation training program with modified scenarios from the NHS Lothian Junior doctor simulation program, adaptations taking in PAs scope of practice (i.e being unable to prescribe). 15 PAs were invited to attend the first simulation session. 14 attended. Our first session included three scenarios focusing on hypoglycemia, major haemorrhage and sepsis presentations. 12 candidates filled a feedback questionnaire consisting off questionnaires using Likert scales and written feedback. Feedback was collected immediately after sessions were completed.



Photograph of PAs filling in an evaluation form following a socially distanced Simulation session, August 2020.

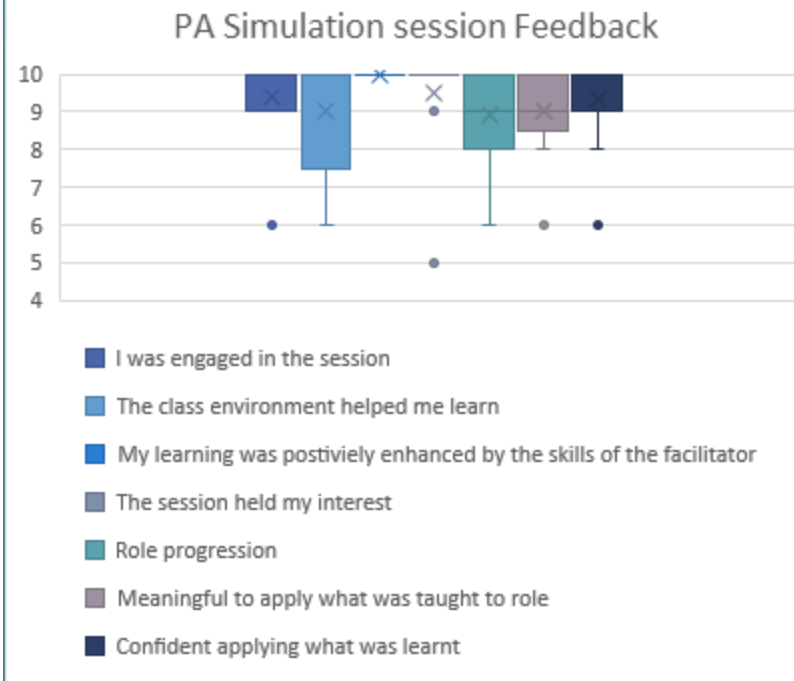


Table 1: Box plot showing feedback from likert scales. 1 = strongly disagree 10 = strongly agree

Results

Results showed that the training sessions were found to be useful by the PAs taken part and that participating candidates felt more confident in the clinical practice there after (table 1, figure 1). Most common themes in written feedback is shown in figure 1. Negative feedback received was that there was no senior support early in the scenarios.

Conclusion

The introduction of a simulation program in postgraduate PA training has proven to be well received from those who participated in the initial settings and has had a positive influence on PA practice. Feedback has shown improvement in technical and non-technical skills. Increased confidence was the most frequent positive reported outcome from the sessions, supporting our aim to help prepare PAs to assess and treat acute unwell patients. We aim to continue to further develop and evaluate the PA simulation program, with two further session through out the year focusing on technical and none technical skills.

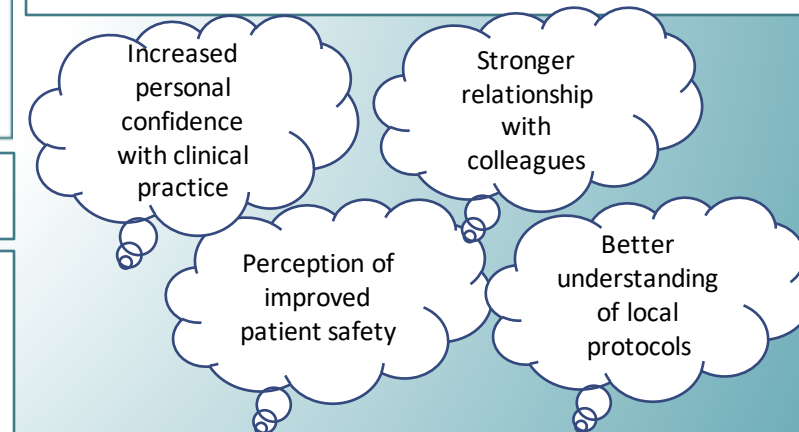


Figure 1 showing speech bubbles with written feedback and statements that received the most 'strongly agree' answer from the cohort