Title: Simulated learning in a mock ward setting: a tool for developing clinical knowledge, improving patient safety and inspiring future hospital pharmacists.

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Background:
Traditional didactic teaching and learning methods can provide fundamental knowledge, but do not develop the clinical skills that are required to apply knowledge to complex, patient-focused scenarios. Simulated learning sessions have been successfully implemented as a tool for developing the required skills in a safe and realistic setting (Aggarwal et al 2010). Recent investment at the University provided the creation of four purpose-built mock wards each replicating the clinical environment of an acute hospital setting.

Aim:
To explore the perceptions of pharmacy students towards simulated learning as a tool for developing clinical knowledge and stimulating an interest in hospital pharmacy.

Method:
A series of simulated learning sessions were delivered to Stage 3 pharmacy students; students participated in mock ward rounds and sessions utilising SimMan® 3G technology. A particular focus was directed towards patient safety and the safe prescribing of high-risk drugs, such as insulin and opioid analgesics. A qualitative evaluation was performed, consisting of a focus group with a representative sample of 8 students.

Results:
Students perceived simulated learning to have improved their retention of knowledge and their ability to apply concepts to the care of patients. Students reported that the sessions required them to adapt to unfamiliar and challenging situations; a skill which will be beneficial for them in practice. Following the sessions, a number of students expressed a desire to pursue a career in hospital pharmacy.

One of the key observations made was the high level of engagement in the simulated ward sessions compared to traditional classroom activities; the interactive nature of the sessions facilitated a higher level of discussion around key topics.

Students highlighted the potential benefits of increasing the number of interactive resources in the sessions; further utilisation of SimMan® 3G and
additional facilitators, such as nursing staff, medics and patients could enhance the realism of the simulation.

Conclusion:

Students perceive that simulated learning can enhance knowledge retention and develop the ability to adapt to challenging situations. Simulated ward activities can be utilised to develop aspirations towards a career in hospital pharmacy.

References: