

Fostering effective communication in simulated emergencies: A qualitative evaluation of undergraduate medic-midwifery interprofessional learning

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Background – The Ockenden review of the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust maternity services identified poor working relationships and communication skills between healthcare professionals which contributed to adverse obstetric outcomes. An immediate and essential action of the review was that ‘staff that work together must train together’ to improve communication skills and interprofessional relationships. Undergraduate medical and midwifery education providers are well placed to address these issues through interprofessional learning (IPL) interventions. The aim of this study was to understand the attitudes and perceptions towards an obstetric IPL scenario designed to address communication skills, teamworking and respect for each other’s roles.

Methods – We evaluated an IPL session for medical and midwifery students using a mixed-methods survey and in-depth interviews. Participants were undergraduate students, educational staff and simulated patients from the Patient, Carer and Public Involvement programme. Survey results were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, and interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

Outcomes – Survey analysis indicated an improvement in perceived communication skills and interprofessional relationships. Thematic analysis of qualitative interviews identified themes of professional responsibility, communication, decision making, support and confidence. Attitudes towards the session were overwhelmingly positive. Practical constraints of running IPL were identified.

Learning points and take-home messages- IPL has demonstrated benefit for improving communication and teamworking skills, mutual respect, and understanding of different professional roles between undergraduate medical and midwifery students. The role of including simulated patients with lived experience was highlighted. Longitudinal research is required to establish whether Undergraduate IPL has lasting benefits in later clinical practice.