

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT LED CLINICAL SKILLS EVENTS

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Background

Undergraduate medical students frequently face limited opportunities to practice clinical skills and integrate these into patient encounters. They actively seek out practice opportunities for skills they perceive as integral to the practice of medicine.

The current landscape of restricted patient access due to COVID 19, increasing competition for clinical placements with other health professional students, sicker patients and shorter inpatient stays all result in students looking for alternatives to improve their knowledge and skills. James Cook University (JCU) student associations and special interest groups offer student support and external opportunities for skills practice through guest speaker nights and student led clinical skills events.

Summary of work

Development of these student skills events over the past 8+ years initially focused on providing practical skills exposure such as suturing using synthetic substitutes and urinary catheterisation using simulation trainers. With encouragement and academic staff expertise, these events have introduced high fidelity simulation in the form of case-based scenarios. These vary from simple ED management of chest pain through to paediatric near drowning scenarios.

To support these events, a structured planning process incorporating regular meetings between academic, technical and student group representatives, staged completion of online documentation and full risk assessments is done. Formalising this process and integrating with student and university requirements fosters safe events, and just as importantly, mentors those student leaders with an interest in education.

Summary of results

Students surveyed about their priorities for learning consistently score *'increased opportunities for clinical skills practice'*, and *'participation in case-based simulation scenarios'* very highly in their feedback.

Following a JCU Surgical Society event, (with staff supported practice sessions) JCU students earned third place in a state-wide competition involving theory, laparoscopic and suturing skill stations.

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of some student interest groups, simulation scenarios have encouraged inter-professional interactions in an authentic, safe, and supported environment. This has helped students develop an understanding of different health professional roles without 'real world' stressors.

Over the timeframe described, the number and variety of student led events has risen from 3 – 4 annually, to ten events in 2019. With the restrictions of COVID, that number is slowly returning with students very focussed on recouping some of the lost opportunities in clinical skills. Indicating their wish to be included in simulated patient focused, hybrid and high-fidelity simulation activities.