

Specialty referrals simulation: an educational initiative for final year medical students

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Background and objective

Making telephone referrals to specialty registrars is a key task of foundation trainees. However, most medical schools do not teach this as a practical skill. We designed and implemented a practical workshop on making referrals, with the aim of increasing student confidence.

Methods

We drew on our experiences as foundation doctors to design a structured workshop tailored to the learning needs of final year students. It comprised an introductory lecture and demonstration followed by 5–6 small-group rotations. Each station contained simulated patient notes, observation charts, drug charts and test results to create a scenario in which a specialty referral was required. Students had 3 minutes to read the material and 3 minutes to make a telephone referral to a volunteering registrar. The registrars then gave students a 3-minute face-to-face feedback. Pre- and post-workshop surveys were completed.

Results and evaluation

Across the two sessions in 2022, 55 students responded to the pre-workshop questionnaire. Of these, 35 students attended and gave post-workshop feedback. Prior to the workshop, 44 out of 55 (80%) students were not confident or very not confident about making referrals. After the workshop, 28 out of 35 (80%) students were confident or very confident. All of the students reported that the sessions were interactive and relevant to their upcoming foundation year jobs. Free-text answers showed that students found the simulations realistic, enjoyable and of high educational value.

Conclusions

Near-peer, junior doctor-led, simulation-based training on making specialty referrals is highly effective at boosting final year medical students' confidence. ■

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