

Peer-assisted learning: something to feel confident about

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Introduction

Peer-assisted learning (PAL) enables senior medical students to assist in the training and learning of junior medical students. Senior medical students from Manchester Medical School (MMS) developed a PAL scheme (PALS) for students training at University Hospital of South Manchester (UHSM). Senior medical students were trained as examiners and junior medical students acted as candidates in a series of mock OSCE examination stations.

Aims

To examine whether participation in PALS reduced anxiety and improved confidence in OSCE performance for medical students involved.

Methods

Data were prospectively collected from the junior (candidate) and senior (examiner) medical student year groups using questionnaire pre and post participation.

Results

Prior to participation in PALS, 95% of junior medical students acting as candidates felt anxious thinking about their forthcoming OSCE examinations, with 59% in the moderate to very anxious category. Importantly, 45% of candidates were anxious about their perceived lack of confidence. Anxiety levels were reduced in 74% by the end of the experience and 96% felt better equipped in preparing for their examinations. This was a mutually beneficial process, with 89% of examiners stating that PALS had improved their own OSCE technique, and 26% reporting reduced anxiety as a direct result of preparation. Finally, 20% of examiners felt more confident going forward in their own academic milestones.

Conclusions

Participation in PALS enhanced personal development and boosted confidence in two student cohorts. Based on these results, this scheme was rolled out in three other hospitals in the north-west region. ■

Conflict of interest statement

No conflict of interest.

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