



General Practice Out of Programme Study Sessions

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Background

Seven trainees from Wessex did not demonstrate sufficient progression in their training to obtain their General Practice certificate of completion of training (CCT) at the close of their training. There were insufficient GP posts to accommodate them in extensions and they were consequently placed out of programme for six months until places became available. During this time they were able to locum in hospital jobs but not in their chosen career specialty of general practice. This was a first for Wessex and so educators needed to identify how these trainees could be supported during this time.

Summary of work

A fortnightly study session was provided for these trainees, which was run by recently qualified GPs who were also educationalists. It was thought this would help reduce the barrier between tutor and learner, much like the principles involved in 'peer assisted learning'[1]. The programme included Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) practice with feedback, presentations by GPs who had previously struggled with the CSA as well as careers advice. The sessions were guided by the learning needs of the trainees and were thus mainly use for CSA exam practice

Summary of results

After six months of running, each of the trainees have continued to attend the programme. The perception of the facilitators is that they have all improved their consultation skills. Unexpectedly, some gained a considerable amount of insight into the nature and purpose of the CSA and their approach to preparing for it, which led to reflection and change in their practice.

References

1. Irish, B. Harris, M. Skinner, L. & Tebbatts, L. (2003) Peer-assisted Learning. *Education for Primary Care* **14**: 213-29

'I think the main important thing again was not training to pass the CSA but in my case to understand that actually the CSA is there for a reason as it is meant to reflect what is happening in the consultation room and it is supposed to see how prepared you are to continue that for the rest of your life.'

'Something really good was the fact that we got together, shared, discussed and learned from each other's experiences, in the same boat...I am very thankful to every effort made to keep our hope alive during this very, very challenging time'

'Fundamentally meeting up on Fridays has helped in giving me the moral support of a peer group in a similar situation.'

'Having come through the system its important to maintain a peer group to bounce ideas off and keep abreast of issues.'

Conclusion

This programme has allowed the trainees to keep in touch with general practice. It also gave them the opportunity to meet with peers in the same situation, which has helped them accept their situation. They are now back in programme and reported that the sessions gave them some continuity to training despite their unfortunate position.

Take home messages

- A regular supervised study session is helpful for trainees who are out of programme.
- It can help maintain continuity of practice as well as improve insight into training and development.
- Although extra funding was required for these sessions, the hope that is in the long run the outcome for the trainees will be favourable.

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