Learning in the community
Medical student's experiences of training within a community paediatric clinic set in a low-income neighbourhood

Lynn Buckley, PhD Student, School of Public Health, University College Cork
Dr Margaret Curtin & Dr Nicola Corrally, School of Nursing & Midwifery, University College Cork
Katherine Harford, Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships CLG
Dr Louise Gibson, Department of Paediatrics & Child Health, University College Cork

BACKGROUND

Undergraduate medical education in Ireland comprises largely of clinical training within teaching hospitals, with little emphasis on community training [1]. Medical institutions have a responsibility to train a workforce equipped to meet the needs of communities they serve [2]. Studies highlight the need to include clinical experiences which move beyond traditional disease models and expand into the community particularly in the domain of child health [3]. Clinical experience in community child health, a fundamental element of paediatric practice, cannot be provided in teaching hospitals [3].

The Kidscope community paediatric clinic was established for children aged 0-6 years living in a disadvantaged area of Cork. Kidscope plays a pivotal role in providing assessment and onward referral for vulnerable children in a timely manner. Kidscope offers clinical experience to undergraduate medical students. Consultations are student-led and supported by a consultant paediatrician. Students gain experience in a range of activities from medical and developmental observations to eliciting family histories and developing healthcare and family support plans.

We aimed to capture the experiences of medical students and to understand the perceived impact of a community training on undergraduate medical education.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study design: Mixed methods case study

Reporting guidelines: Mixed Methods Research Design Standards

Research questions:
1. How has Kidscope influenced undergraduate training?
2. How has training within Kidscope informed student’s perspectives of working with vulnerable children and families?
3. What are medical student’s perspectives of Kidscope and its model of care?

Data collection:
• Mixed-methods questionnaire via Survey Monkey
• Qualitative reflective essays

Data analysis:
• MS Excel used to collate questionnaire responses
• Descriptive statistics generated for close-ended questions
• NVivo used to collate qualitative data for thematic analysis
• Braun & Clarke’s framework guided thematic analysis [5,6]

RESULTS

52 medical students consented to participate. 32 (62%) responded to the online questionnaire. 20 reflective essays were randomly selected for inclusion.

Questionnaire findings: 94% of students felt the clinic provided an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills, 96% reported the experience strongly improved their understanding of child health and development, and 90% reported the experience was extremely valuable to their overall learning.

Reflective essays: Thematic analysis identified 3 main themes: knowledge acquisition, informing professional practice, and increased knowledge of paediatric models of care.

Quantitative findings show an increase in student’s knowledge of child development. Qualitative findings show one-to-one engagement with children and families impacted student’s professional practice, heightened awareness of social deprivation and its impact on child development, and broadened their understanding of effective models of community paediatrics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The clinic allowed me to consolidate what I had learned through study in a practical community setting.

"Kidscope provided me with a much greater understanding of how to engage with children and families.

"It was my first experience of a loading the interaction with the patient."

"The environment definitely added the assessment of children, in a home, less clinical setting."

CONCLUSION

Training within Kidscope enabled students to be engaged learners in a novel community paediatric setting. Exposure to vulnerable children and families, enhanced clinical learning, practical skills, and increased knowledge of child development and alternative models of paediatric healthcare. Kidscope provides an example of how medical education can be effectively embedded into a community. Our experience of teaching clinical skills in the community could be replicated across medical fields to the benefit of the wider community.

REFERENCES