# STAFF VIEWS ON THE ADAPTED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR MPHARM STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

N. Soni, O.Tsaponia, S.Heasman and J. Portlock
University of Sussex

## Background

Practice experience, such as in-person experiential placements are recommended by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC, 2011). Unfortunately, these were not viable due to the COVID-19 restrictions. As a result, the in-person experience was adapted into a virtual alternative. Coyne et al (2019) suggested that virtual reality may provide students with a safe space to learn from mistakes, which we were keen to create during this experience.

## Study aim and objective

Aim: To Establish the academics' experience of the virtual alternative.

Objective: To capture their experience using a questionnaire.

## Method

Our virtual placement week was spilt into community and hospital pharmacy workshops delivered using Zoom videoconferencing to both 3rd (21 students) and 4th (25 students) year MPharm students. The workshop content was created to ensure that the in-person placement learning outcomes were met. Student engagement tools such as Poll Everywhere, Zoom polls and immersive virtual reality technology were utilised. The academics' experience was assessed via a questionnaire afterwards (18 participants were invited to complete, of whom 14 participated). This was based on similar questionnaires that captured staff opinions on educational initiatives and empirical questions.

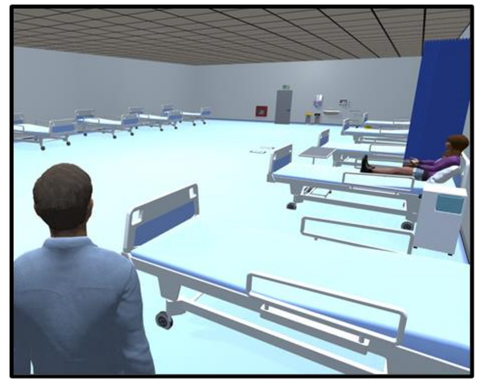

Figure 1: Screenshot of the virtual ward simulation

## Results

When asked "what do you feel students were able to learn from the virtual placement week?"

- Academics reported that they felt students learnt how to apply their taught clinical skills (such as medicines reconciliation) to simulated scenarios.
- They felt students developed their oral presentation skills by means of a case-based discussion.

When asked what impact the virtual placement had on the students' pharmacy practice skills

- 9 out of 14 academics reported that it had provided the students with the opportunity to develop their confidence of utilising these clinical skills.

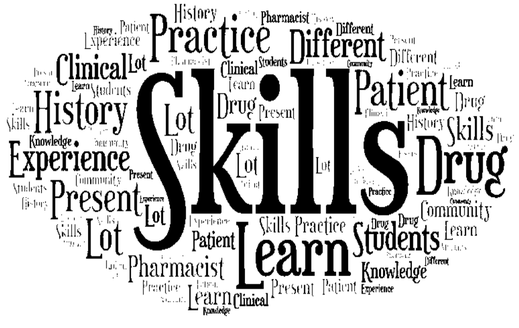


Figure 2: word cloud showing what academics felt students were able to learn from the virtual placement week

## Conclusion

- The virtual placement experience was an excellent learning tool.
- It taught and provided a safe space to practice some of the practical skills students need before becoming a pharmacist.

Going forward, there is a need to ensure that future virtual experiences, reflect a wider range of pharmacy sectors.

## References

General Pharmaceutical Council. (2011). Future pharmacists Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists. Available at: https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/document/gphc_future_pharmacists_may_2011.pdf
Coyne. L, Merritt. T, Parmentier, BL. Sharpton, RA and Takemoto. JK (2019). 'The past, Present, and Future of Virtual Reality in Pharmacy Education'. *AM J Pharm Educ*. 83(3): 281-290. doi: 10.5688/ajpe7456