

Simulated acute care wards: Do they help prepare medical students for future hospital practice?

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Introduction/background:

In 2016, the James Cook University (JCU) medical school's clinical skills unit created a simulated acute care ward ('JCAC'). This was established in collaboration with local hospital emergency department doctors. The focus of JCAC is to teach Year 4 medical students how to manage common sub-acute medical problems in an authentic, safe simulated environment with the overarching aim to better prepare medical students for real-world acute hospital practice.

Aim/objectives:

The aim of the research was to evaluate the Year 4 medical students' self-reported benefits from participating in the JCAC simulated session.

Methods:

Year 4 medical students were administered a 15 item survey to rate the clinical learning experience provided by the JCAC session and a further 4 item survey to rate their confidence level in clinical preparedness. Ethical approval was obtained (#H5595).

Results:

Year 4 medical students reported the JCAC sessions as helpful in integrating their science knowledge with their 'clinical' knowledge and thinking of the person as a whole. The students also described the sessions as assisting with increasing their confidence and independence to diagnose and treat 'real people'. Students also found the JCAC sessions '*super helpful*' in being able to self-identify knowledge gaps and in learning how to develop patient management plans.

Discussion

Authentic simulated learning activities, such as JCAC, are extremely helpful in developing confidence and independence in medical students and in bridging the theory-practice gap.

Conclusions:

JCAC sessions provide integrated learning experiences that develops clinical reasoning skills and improves patient-centered care.