Communicating Confidence: Peer-led Small Group Teaching to Improve Confidence in Approaching MRCP PACES Communications and History Taking Skills Stations

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Background and Aims
With a pass rate of 44%\(^1\) the MRCP PACES exam represents a significant but necessary hurdle to medical trainees on their journey to becoming a medical registrar. History and communication skills stations (Stations 2 and 4) are the lowest scoring for candidates sitting the exam\(^1\). Despite arguably being the most practised skills in junior doctors day to day practice, candidates commonly describe a lack of confidence when approaching these stations. We noted from our own experiences that revision is often focused on clinical examination technique.

Peer assisted learning is an excellent tool for building confidence and engagement amongst students\(^2\). We utilised small-group peer-led teaching sessions focusing on Stations 2 and 4 to build confidence amongst candidates approaching the MRCP PACES exam. We hypothesised that peer-led simulation would improve confidence in approaching the exam.

Methods
We set up a series of small group scenario based teaching sessions based on Stations 2 and 4 of the MRCP PACES exam. This was open to all trainees in the South East London Deanery. Eight trainees attended three sessions lasting three hours each. Sessions began with a discussion about the station, a presentation on common themes and individual goal setting followed by a simulated scenario for each participant. Personalised feedback was given at the end. We collected anonymised data using an online survey to gain a subjective measure of participants own confidence (scored 0-10) in approaching the exam before and after attending the three teaching sessions.

Results
100% of attendees responded to the online survey (n=8). We found a mean improvement of 43% in confidence amongst candidates in approaching the MRCP PACES exam after attending peer-led teaching sessions. 100% of candidates rated peer-led scenario teaching as a “very effective” confidence building tool.

Conclusions
We demonstrated a significant increase in self reported confidence amongst candidates for Stations 2 & 4 of the MRCP PACES exam using peer-led scenario based teaching. Furthermore all attendees rated this form of teaching as extremely effective method of teaching. Although there is little evidence that improved confidence correlates with improved exam results, our teaching method certainly provides a valid tool for aiding preparation for this challenging exam.

References
1. MRCP(UK) Research Unit. MRCP(UK) Part 2 Clinical examination performance report 2017 [Cited Jan 2018]