A Qualitative investigation of Peer Assisted Learning and MPharm Student Volunteers at the University of Portsmouth.

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Introduction

- Peer assisted learning (PAL) is a scheme involving MPharm student volunteers.
- Year 2 students called PAL leaders.
- Trained in leadership and facilitation skills.
- Run timetabled study skills sessions for Year 1 MPharm students.
- Student led and no academic.
Aim

- To determine the impact and benefit of peer assisted learning (PAL) for Year 2 MPharm PAL leaders at the University of Portsmouth.

- See my poster for impact and benefits for Year 1 MPharm Students.

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Research design

- All 38 MPharm PAL leaders invited to participate.
- Qualitative one-to-one, face-to-face interviews.
- Interviews took place until no additional data emerged which was relevant to the aims of the study.
- 26 leaders were interviewed.
Research design

- Two main questions were used:
  - Tell me why you volunteered to be a PAL leader.
  - How have you benefited from being a PAL leader?

- Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.
- Analysed using thematic analysis.
Results

- 26 PAL leaders volunteered to take part.

- Two main themes emerged:
  - Transferable skills
  - Professionalism.
Results

- Key transferable skills identified:
  - Confidence
  - Communication
  - Organisation
  - Team-work
  - Interpersonal
  - Time management.

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Results

- Professionalism.
- This leadership role:
  - Helped them integrate with all years.
  - Made them think about how they behaved both in and outside of university.
  - Made them think about how they approached their own academic studies.

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Results

- All leaders stated that the:
- Skills and experiences gained could be used throughout their degree and when they become pharmacists.
- Some leaders thought this opportunity could make them more employable.
Results

- Why did they become PAL leaders?
- Wanted to help first year MPharm students with their transition into university.
- Very few stated “it would look good on my CV”.

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Conclusion

- Students benefit from being a PAL leader.

- An additional opportunity for students to develop transferable skills and professionalism.
Conclusion

- Employability:
  - Draws on attributes developed and used in multiple settings.
  - The student-led approach of PAL could provide an additional opportunity to enhance employability.
Conclusion

- Further impact evaluation research of the benefits of PAL, to new students and PAL leaders.
- Could lead to a change in university policy.
- PAL could become a valued priority for resourcing.
- More embedded into institutions’ cultures.