



A quantitative survey of the MPharm peer assisted learning programme at the University of Portsmouth



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Introduction:

Peer assisted learning (PAL) involves Year 2 student volunteers called PAL leaders, trained in leadership and facilitation skills, who run study sessions for Year 1 students. PAL was developed to aid transition into university for Year 1 pharmacy students and the course. PAL leaders were Year 2 pharmacy students.

Aim:

The aim of this study was to determine the perceived impact of peer assisted learning (PAL) upon Year 1 MPharm undergraduates' transition to university and their perceived preparedness for assessment.

Results and Findings:

Feedback from 182 pharmacy students, collected by means of a questionnaire, indicated that those students attending more than 4 PAL sessions (good attenders) during the academic year, benefited more than those attending fewer sessions (poor attenders).

Students perceived an "enhanced knowledge and understanding of course topics" (60% good attenders compared to 34% poor attenders); "better understanding of how to meet course expectations" (51% compared to 22%) and an overall "confidence with the course" (42% compared to 11%).

Attending PAL increased students' perceived "preparedness for assessments" (86% compared to 59%).



Research Methodology:

Eight PAL sessions were timetabled during the academic year and two PAL leaders facilitated 20 pharmacy students.

Topics were student-led, meaning Year 1 students had control of the subjects to study and discuss in sessions.

PAL leaders encouraged collaborative learning and consolidation of knowledge between students.

Conclusion:

Students found PAL sessions useful and regular attendance impacts upon pharmacy students' perceived knowledge, understanding and confidence with their course.

As PAL becomes embedded into institutions' cultures and the benefits further evidenced by impact-evaluation research, it should become a valued priority for resourcing.

References:

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