Evaluation of a Simulation Course in Deceased Organ Donation

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Introduction: In the U.K. three people die each day waiting for an organ transplant. The shortage of organs has become a national priority. The General Medical Council (GMC), Department of Health and National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) have all recently published guidance on this topic. Formal staff training in this complex and emotive area poses significant challenges and is currently seldom performed.

To address this need locally, a one-day simulation course was developed collaboratively between the Trent Simulation & Clinical Skills Centre and Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust Organ Donation Committee. It was successfully piloted in 2011 and has been delivered five further times. We are currently in the process of evaluating the course; our preliminary results are described here.

Objectives: To evaluate the success of the Nottingham simulation course in deceased organ donation and identify any areas for improvement.

Material/Patients and Methods or Expected Audience: The course follows the journey of two cases from arrival in the Emergency Department to their transfer to theatre for organ recovery. It adopts a multidisciplinary approach including the use of high fidelity mannequins in combination with non-crisis simulation elements to make the experience as realistic as possible. Trained actors represent family members.

Pre- and post-course evaluation questionnaires are completed by the participants, which include both quantitative and qualitative free-text components.

Results / Requirements/Specific needs: 54 course evaluations were available for review.

There was clearly a positive effect on the development of new knowledge, skills and ‘ways of thinking’ each with median Likert scores of 5 (IQR 4-5), indicating a strong agreement (a 5 point scale was used). The data also showed an increased level of confidence in the participants’ ability to manage issues surrounding deceased donation. Confidence levels were scored out of 5, with 5 being highly confident. A paired t-test demonstrated a significant difference between pre- and post- course scores: t(53)=9.431, p<0.05 with a mean score increase of 1.29, 95% CI [1.003-1.561].

Analysis of the free text responses shows a high level of satisfaction with the course. In particular the participants valued the discussion on communication techniques, the multidisciplinary aspect and feedback from the actors’ was considered to be ‘particularly powerful’.

In terms of improvements to the course, suggestions included: more discussion on handling difficulties with relatives, such as differing opinions on donation, and to further discuss the role of the Specialist Nurse in Organ Donation. 12 participants wrote ‘nil’or ‘nothing’.

Conclusion / Description of the session: The course has been very well received and has demonstrated improvements in knowledge, skills, ‘ways of thinking’ and confidence in managing deceased organ donation. Suggestions for improvement related to additional topics for discussion. Our on-going intention is to continue running the course but formerly evaluate its transfer into practice by contacting previous course participants to assess if there has been any lasting impact.

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