Large scale practice projects as a model for undergraduate research

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Background: All University of Nottingham pharmacy students undertake research projects as part of their degree. In the pre-2012 course this is in year 4, in the post 2012 course in year 3. Thus in 2014/5 we were presented with a unique opportunity, some 550 project students requiring projects, and a year 4 cohort asking for more placement experience. Relationships with local community pharmacies are good however the School wished to build on this further.

Description: Academics in the School identified potential areas of interest and discussed these with the Local Professional Network for Pharmacy and the Nottinghamshire Local Pharmaceutical Committee. It was agreed that students would survey patients in community pharmacies locally about perceptions of OTC medicines and delivery of services from community pharmacy with a special focus on the delivery of influenza vaccination. Academics from the School designed a researcher administered questionnaire covering the areas of interest. Training was provided to the student group undertaking the project in research methods in line with normal undergraduate project procedures. Eighty three students attended 31 community pharmacies in the Nottinghamshire area over a four week period including weekends. Up to three students were assigned to each pharmacy to maximise data collection coverage and to be as representative as possible. In total 7154 questionnaires were completed which are currently being analysed.

Proposed Evaluation: As this was a new way to provide projects in the School, student and supervisor views on the project experience are being sought. The aim of this study is to evaluate student and stakeholder experiences of this model of research project. Questionnaires will gather student and supervisor views of the project. Additionally interviews and focus groups with staff, students and hosting pharmacists will explore some of the issues in depth.