Setting the Scene – Development of a longitudinal simulation to integrate clinical communications and professionalism into a new MPharm Programme

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Background: One UK Pharmacy School received its first cohort in October 2013. An innovative, highly novel, evidence based and creative simulation was designed to improve the development of communication abilities and professional identities. Design of the course revolves around the concept that all of the professionalism teaching relates to a single, complex simulation evolving over the entire programme, which will impact on the students' competence and confidence in professional practice teaching and clinical placements.

Description of work: In Year 1 students were introduced to 'Wood Brooke', a fictitious (but plausible) inner city pharmacy servicing a GP surgery and community-hospital, with central 'families', pharmacy, staff and population demographic. Teaching methods include panel-interviews, group and one-on-one role plays with simulated-patients, lectures and small group cases. New characters are 'fed in' by live role play or video links.

Proposed evaluation: Pre-teaching, students (n=80) completed a validated CSAS (Communication Skills Attitude Scale), which will be repeated in May 2014 to identify shifts in perceptions related to students' fundamental attitudes and values relating to the importance of good communication for pharmacists and their feelings about how clinical communication is taught at this school. A series of mini focus groups with first year Pharmacy students in their second semester will provide qualitative feedback on positive and negative attitudes towards clinical communication learning and its integration within the wider MPharm programme, including the first year clinical placements. The aim of the study is to evaluate pharmacy students' attitudes towards a new communication curriculum at this school of pharmacy. Findings from both methodologies will be used to develop the communication curricula and complex simulation for subsequent years and to refine the first year teaching interventions and clinical placements.