Non-Technical Skills (NTS) Training for Specialist Trainees Using Simulation – A Pilot Course for Intensive Care Trainees

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Background and Aim

The Commonwealth of Australia funded an initiative (managed by the Australian Society for Simulation in Healthcare (ASSH)) aimed at promoting NTS relevant to specialist training in synthetic learning environments. NTS are cognitive functioning and observable behaviours that underpin safe and effective clinical practice.

The aims of this project were to develop and pilot a curriculum of NTS using Simulation for ICU trainees.

Methods

We identified the areas of Advanced Communication in the context of Family Conferencing (breaking bad news, open disclosure, conflict resolution, aspects of End-of-Life (EOL) care) and Crisis Resource Management as particular NTS pertinent to Intensive Care practice that lend themselves well to the simulated environment. Collaborating with the Joint Faculty (JFICM), Communication, CRM and other content experts, a 2-day course incorporating didactic presentations, workshops and a variety of simulation techniques including simulated patients (professional
actors), hybrid and high fidelity simulation was run for 11 trainees at St Vincent’s Hospital Sydney.

Participant evaluation was obtained through pre and post-course questionnaires.

**Results**

Overall the course rated highly for relevance, realism, course quality and simulation experience. Participants were unanimous in recommending the course to colleagues. All but one participant felt there they had the opportunity to practice skills they otherwise were not able to during their training. Obtaining feedback about their communication skills during the simulations was valuable to their learning experience. While only half the group was experienced in leading family discussions, by the end of the course, all felt confident in leading a discussion involving breaking bad news and EOL decisions.

**Conclusions**

The learning objectives of this pilot course were achieved effectively with the use of various Simulation techniques. The feedback suggests that this course is relevant to ICU training and could address potential gaps in the curriculum. The challenges at hand relate to reproducibility and feasibility, and tying learning objectives to improved practice.
References

1. Simulation Industry Association of Australia Ltd – Contractor’s Agreement November 2008