

Undergraduate Training in Trauma & Orthopaedics in the UK: Improvement in Students' Confidence and Knowledge Following a Focused One-Day Course

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Background:

Musculoskeletal conditions account for 20-27% of all referrals to primary and emergency care¹⁻³, yet deficiency in UK undergraduate training in Trauma and Orthopaedics (T&O) remains well recognised⁴. CollabORTHO, a national collaboration of trainees was formed in December 2013, to help address this through provision of free one-day orthopaedic revision courses across the UK.

Aims:

To evaluate the undergraduate experience of T&O training and assess final-year students' perceived level of confidence and knowledge before and after the course.

Methodology:

A bespoke questionnaire was distributed to students that attended CollabORTHO courses between March'14 and Jan'15. Course content was developed in accordance with British Orthopaedic Association's recommendations for the undergraduate T&O syllabus⁵. Mode of teaching consisted of lecture-based and small-group teaching (SGT).

Results:

147 final-year students from 10 UK medical schools completed the questionnaire. 41% (n=60) rated undergraduate T&O training as "poor", with 16% (n=24) stating that they had never experienced a clinical placement in T&O. Majority (60%, n=88) of students were allocated ≤ 3 weeks for their T&O rotations. Only 50% (n=74) and 23% (n=34) attended >3 orthopaedic clinics and trauma meetings respectively.

Following course completion, significant improvement ($p < 0.05$) in students' respective confidence and knowledge in key T&O topics was reported (Pre-course: 4.9/10 and 5.4/10, post-course: 8.1/10 and 8.2/10. 1=no confidence/knowledge, 10=complete confidence/knowledge). Both lectures and SGT received positive feedback, with average satisfaction ratings of 8.4/10 and 9.0/10 respectively.

Discussion and Conclusions:

This study demonstrates that UK medical schools are currently failing to provide adequate training in T&O, with final-year students graduating with low levels of perceived confidence and knowledge in T&O. This may have potential implications on patient-care and safety. Our intensive course, as short as one-day, has been shown to significantly improve students' knowledge and confidence. Implementation of a nationally-commissioned strategy could play a vital role in improving the quality of undergraduate T&O training in the UK.

References

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