Identifying fundamental elements of learning in a simulated clinical setting using a Delphi technique.

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Introduction
4th year medical students participated in the Safe and Effective Clinical Outcomes (SECO) simulation clinic. They wrote rich and insightful reflective essays which we were inspired to analyse.

SECO clinic design:
• Perform whole consultation with simulated patients
• Adopt the doctor role for the first time
• Unobserved simulated general practice encounters
• Access to any resources required including phone advice
• Students in control of time management
• Self-assess against pre-determined safe and effective patient outcomes.[1]

Aim: to use an online consensus Delphi technique[2] to validate the student learning themes derived from previous SECO research.[3]

Method, Analysis and Results
• 55 codes extracted with an inductive thematic analysis of 50% of all reflective essays in 2011, 2012 (n=77).[3]
• Online tool sent to 13 international medical education experts.
• Round 1: participants assigned each code (definitions supplied) to the most appropriate of the six offered themes or suggested a new theme.
• Round 2: For each theme participants (n=11) considered all assigned codes and indicated if they agreed or disagreed that each code was a good fit. They added other relevant codes at this stage. Codes could be assigned to >1 theme.
• Consensus on codes assigned to each theme was defined as >50% of participants agreeing on the assignation.
• Participants assigned between 11 and 38 codes per theme.
• Participants suggested six new themes, of which two were confirmed as validated by the student.

Discussion and Future Work
• Themes could be regarded as educational outcomes achievable in a simulation/clinical setting.
• Codes under each theme can be grouped as enablers, definers or triggers for the outcome.
• Preliminary analysis suggested that a number of themes are key to enriching student learning in the SECO environment.
• We were surprised that of the new themes, participants selected two that pertained to students’ motivation for, and engagement in learning. Researchers may be more cautious interpreting their own data than other field experts.
• We will explore the literature to theoretically triangulate the validity of the themes and subthemes.
• Future work will extend these themes to develop a research instrument for evaluating student learning outcomes in the context of SECO.
• The instrument then will be deployed to assess the efficacy and scalability of the SECO simulated learning environment in other related health domains.

We are interested in how the themes can be operationalised in other settings.
• Are the themes useful elements for describing and evaluating experiential learning in simulated or other clinical settings?
• How do your learning environments create possibilities for developing these elements of experiential learning?

References

SECO resources, description and a video is available at tinyurl.com/SECOclinic

We have the students’ and actors’ permission to use these images.

Acknowledgements
We are grateful to our students, to Delphi participants, to the University of Otago Committee for the Advancement Learning and Teaching grant for funding the research, and to the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners Research and Education Charitable Trust for funding the conference travel.

We would love to talk to you about our research! Please email jessica.young@otago.ac.nz