

Patient participation in undergraduate medical education: development of an informative patient resource

The Problem:

Medical students spend up to 15% of their curricula time in the general practice setting. One important feature of general practice teaching is patient-based learning. There are a range of ways in which patients might be asked to participate in student interactions. This project aims to explore what information patients would find helpful when considering involvement and how this might best be made available to them. These findings will be used to inform development of a resource for patients considering involvement in primary care based undergraduate teaching.

The Approach:

We conducted two patient focus groups. We used a topic guide to facilitate discussions, exploring what patient participants thought would be useful to know prior to being involved in undergraduate medical student teaching. Focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analysed iteratively and coded thematically. These themes were developed into a thematic framework.

Findings:

Participants highlight the importance of confidentiality and timely consent. They would like information about the students (e.g. seniority) and the focus of their learning (what relevant patient experience they can bring). Patients want to be included in the teaching and feel their involvement (in addition to their 'disease') matters. They emphasise the importance of a prior, trusting relationship with the clinician/teacher, to maximise engagement and positive teaching experiences of teaching encounters. Finally, participants would like ways in which the general practice space can share and make explicit its teaching role with patients (e.g. written info about students and how patients can help).

Consequences:

While there are national resources for patients involved in research (e.g. INVOLVE), there are few sources of information for patients involved in or invited to participate in medical education teaching. This study will shape recommendations for developing resources to communicate with patients about participation in general practice teaching encounters. We will use these findings and existing literature to inform design of resources (e.g. website or written information) which could be used by patients and GPs in the UK and elsewhere. By providing contemporary information for patients about the teaching in which they are going to participate, we hope to improve the quality, relevance and utility of consent procedures and the teaching interactions for students, patients and GPs.

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