

IN PRACTICE

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EXPLORING INSTRUCTORS' PERSPECTIVES ON SIMULATION-BASED SURGICAL TRAINING: ADDRESSING SCEPTICISM AND CULTIVATING ENTHUSIASM

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Introduction: Simulation-based surgical training has revolutionised contemporary medical education by providing a controlled environment for learners to develop clinical skills and enhance patient safety [1]. Despite its widespread adoption, there remains a gap in understanding the perceptions and values that surgical consultants hold toward simulation-based methodologies [29]. This study aims to explore instructors' viewpoints comprehensively to improve the effectiveness of surgical training programs.

Methods: Consultant surgeons teaching a course at a large London teaching hospital were invited to complete an 8-item survey exploring their enjoyment of teaching, enthusiasm for educational subjects, and perceptions of simulation's

significance, followed by a one-to-one in-depth interview. Thematic analysis was performed on the qualitative data.

Results: Eleven surgeons specialising in General, Paediatric, Orthopaedic, and Ear, Nose, and Throat Surgery participated in the study. Enthusiasm for teaching was high (mean: 4.7/5) and simulation was viewed as valuable for effective learning and practice (mean: 4.8/5). Participants endorsed the role of simulation in translating theoretical knowledge into practical skills, enhancing patient safety, and fostering enjoyable learning experiences.

Qualitative analyses disclosed instructors' perspectives on the ability of simulation to prepare novices for surgical procedures and enhance anatomical comprehension. A prevailing theme of scepticism among surgical educators towards simulation-based methodologies emerged, with references for traditional teaching methods such as real-life experiences and procedural demonstrations due to their perceived authenticity and effectiveness in providing realistic hands-on experiences for learners.

Discussion: This study demonstrates that despite the recognised value of simulation, a significant proportion of consultant surgeon instructors still hold a preference for traditional teaching methods. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the prevailing scepticism among surgical instructors towards simulation-based methodologies, which may contribute to disengagement and suboptimal learning outcomes among students [3]. Encouraging enthusiasm among surgical simulation instructors is essential to optimising student learning experiences and overcoming scepticism towards innovative teaching approaches. Professional development initiatives focusing on motivation and instructional strategies can reignite enthusiasm and improve teaching effectiveness.

This study reveals a dichotomy in surgeons' attitudes towards simulation-based training, with high enthusiasm for teaching and recognition of simulation's value countered by persistent scepticism towards its effectiveness compared to traditional methods. Addressing this scepticism is crucial for optimising learning outcomes and improving surgical education. Encouraging instructor enthusiasm through targeted professional development can promote innovative teaching approaches. This research emphasises the importance of overcoming scepticism to enhance medical training programs, advancing simulation-based education, and fostering safer environments for future clinicians.

Ethics statement: Authors confirm that all relevant ethical standards for research conduct and dissemination have been met. The submitting author confirms that relevant ethical approval was granted, if applicable.

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