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LITERATURE REVIEW

A112   **IN HEALTHCARE STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS, DOES THE USE OF VIRTUAL STANDARDISED PATIENTS (VSPS), VERSUS OTHER FORMS OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE, PROVIDE GREATER EFFICACY OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING?**

Swechhya Banstola[1]; [1]*University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom,* [2]*University Hospitals of Derby and Burton, Burton-on-Trent, United Kingdom*

Correspondence: swechhya.banstola@nhs.net

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Introduction: Communication skills are integral amongst healthcare students and professionals. With growing numbers of students and need for undergraduate and post-graduate training, it is often difficult to further enhance communication skills training through usual methods such as clinical placements or standardised patients [1]. With a digital shift in healthcare, especially catalysed within healthcare education during the Coronavirus-19 pandemic [2], there could be potential use for the application of Virtual Standardised Patients (VSPs) to enhance such training, providing an emotionally intelligent, and conversational interface [3]. This systematic review aims to evaluate the efficacy of using Virtual Standardised Patients for communication skills training within healthcare professionals and students compared to other educational activity.

Methods: This systematic review combined searches from 5 bibliographic databases (MEDLINE OVID, EMBASE OVID, ERIC EBSCO, AMED EBSCO, and CINAHL EBSCO) and search of reference lists to scope RCTs that met the study's pre-determined eligibility criteria. Upon retrieval of studies, data collection and critical analysis of risk of bias and methodological quality took place. A narrative synthesis was then conducted exploring findings based on the Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model.

Results: Upon search retrieval: MEDLINE OVID= 1248, EMBASE OVID=2410, ERIC EBSCO= 27, AMED EBSCO= 16, and CINAHL EBSCO= 127, six studies successfully met the eligibility criteria and were included in the result synthesis, with a total of 816 participants. Studies showed an overall greater effect in favour of VSPs in comparison to other educational activity, as well as maintenance of this difference, however, showed inconsistency in findings for user experience.

Discussion: Although not to replace current training, VSP, as an interactive, conversational tool, can provide scope to enhance communication skill training. However, further research is necessary to assess effects of more long-term training and clinical outcomes.

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.