

Delivering patient centred care; advanced communication skills teaching.

Dr K. Brown, Dr Z. Noonan, Dr L. Crawford

Year 3 medical students at the University of Glasgow participate in an advanced communication skills workshop exploring communication with patients who have learning disabilities, to enhance GP placement learning. Patients with learning disabilities represent a small but significant proportion of a GP's caseload. Managing these patients, who have increased morbidity and mortality rates and reduced life expectancy, requires advanced communication and consultation skills. This workshop enabled students to reflect on the challenges to communicating where there is diversity between the patient and doctor and was consciously designed to address identified gaps in our curriculum.

Curriculum Alignment

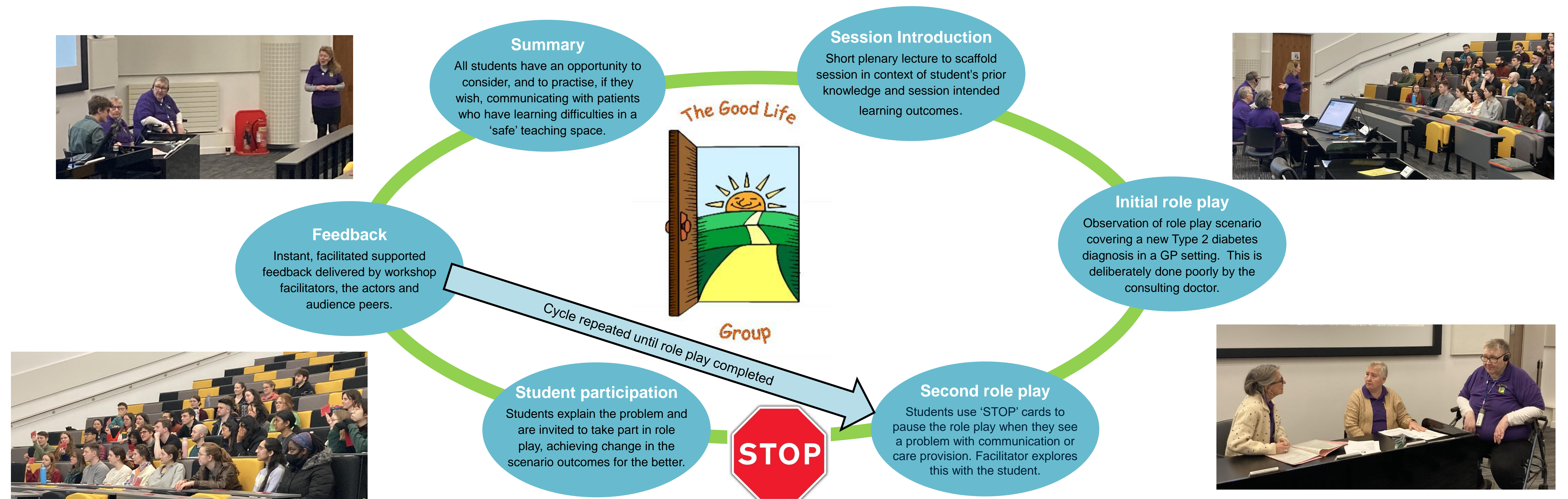
Newly qualified doctors in the UK need to achieve competencies detailed in the General Medical Council (GMC) Outcomes for graduates¹. Outcomes specifically covered by this workshop include:

- Being able to communicate clearly, sensitively and effectively with patients ... for example for people who communicate differently due to a disability.
- Recognise the potential impact of their attitudes and personal biases on individuals and groups.
- Provide information about options in a way that enables patients to make decisions about their care.

The workshop was delivered during the students first placement in general practice to scaffold and augment learning experiences with real patients as early as possible in the course, thus maximising the opportunity for students to hone and practise these skills during their studies.

Teaching session format with The Good Life Group

The Good life group are a team of learning-disabled actors who provide training for various stakeholders, including medical students. The communication skills workshop is delivered using forum theatre. Students engage and intervene in the action, making this an immersive, engaging and enjoyable learning experience.



Student feedback



Conclusions

Students enjoyed having the opportunity to consider and practise how to communicate with people who have learning difficulties. The following themes emerged from student feedback:

- **Learning from people with lived experience:** students enjoyed the opportunity to be trained by people with learning disabilities and to consider the importance of communicating well with this vulnerable and often marginalised group of people.
- **Importance of communication skills:** This workshop provided a new perspective, and greater understanding, that effective communication skills lead to better outcomes through improved patient safety, symptom recognition, and improvements in functional and psychological status.
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion:** students could reflect on the challenges in a consultation where there is diversity between the patient and practitioner; and could consider their own personal bias or worries when caring and communicating with someone with a learning disability.

This innovative workshop provides a safe learning environment for students to practise communication strategies to use when consulting with diverse patient groups, including people with learning disabilities. Student feedback illustrates how this workshop enhanced the learning experience of Year 3 medical students.