Other journals in brief

A selection of abstracts of clinically relevant papers from other journals.

The abstracts on this page have been chosen and edited by Paul Hellyer

Student-led audits improve clinical outcomes

Clinical audit training improves undergraduates' performance in root canal therapy

Fong JYM, Tan VJH, Lee JR *et al.* *Eur J Dent Educ* 2018; **22**: 160–166

The standards of record keeping also got better

The clinical audit/feedback cycle has become one of the cornerstones of improving patient outcomes. However, evidence of appropriate audit training within the undergraduate curriculum is limited.

In this study, undergraduates were trained to audit the radiographic quality of root canal treatment carried out in previous academic years. Over 5 years, significant improvements were made in the recording of the use of pulpal sensitivity tests (from 53.9% to 83.9%), of rubber dam (from 15.8% to 85.7%) and record keeping, in particular the dose and type of local anaesthetic used (although a decrease in the recording of systemic medication was noted, from 8.6% to 1.8%). Overall percentages of root fillings deemed acceptable, as assessed against the European Society of Endodontology guidelines, increased from 44.7% in 2012 to 76.8% in 2015.

In presenting the audit findings to both students and teaching staff, both endodontic and supervision protocols were reassessed each year. The resulting improvements in clinical outcomes for patients indicate an overall quality of root canal fillings which compare well to published findings from other undergraduate institutions.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2018.897

A lack of belongingness may lead to increased stress

Belongingness and its implications for undergraduate health professions education: a scoping review

Vivekananda-Schmidt P, Sandars J. *Educ Prim Care* 2018;

DOI: 10.1080/14739879.2018.1478677

Belongingness improves academic performance and student retention

The importance of belongingness in the realm of higher education is being increasingly recognised. Definitions include the terms 'connection' to, and 'acceptance' from, peer groups and teachers. Belongingness may develop through encouragement of reflective practices, the role of personal tutors, and the creation of social spaces and activities.

A sense of belongingness to a learning environment has been shown to influence learner engagement, and has an important role in identity formation and in maximising student retention. A lack of belongingness has been identified with increased stress and suicidal thoughts.

The literature about belongingness challenges researchers to increase focus on the macro educational environment. They ask, as belongingness influences identity formation, whether it also influences the development of a professional identity in healthcare education?

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2018.898

Art can be a tool for learning

Using photography to enhance GP trainees' reflective practice and professional development

Rutherford E F, Priego-Hernandez J *et al.* *Med Humanit* 2018; **444**: 158–164

Creative and abstract thinking encouraged by photography

The General Dental Council stresses the importance of reflection in the learning process and personal development. Their advice states that: 'The aim of reflection is for you to think about the outcomes of your CPD activity, focusing on what you have learned from the activity and how this influences your daily practice and duties.' (<https://bit.ly/2PYqqk0>)

The General Medical Council, however, requires doctors to reflect on their performance *and* professional values. The Royal College of General Practitioners states that reflection underpins 'understanding ... your own attitudes, strengths and weaknesses, values and beliefs ... (developing) an insight and an awareness of self'. Reflection, however, is not an innate skill and practical instruction is often needed for its development. Other arts projects have facilitated this previously, using such tools as creative writing, film, theatre and comics.

This study reports on an innovative project using photography, in which eight GP trainees attended 2 × 3 hour workshops. At the first workshop, attendees were asked to bring two images which they had recorded previously, to which they felt an emotional response. These were displayed anonymously and discussed by the group, facilitated by a professional photographer, highlighting what stories these pictures may tell and why the image taker may have felt the subject to be relevant. Over the following 4 weeks, the trainees were asked to carry a camera (the ubiquitous nature of the smartphone makes this a reality for most) and record images to which they felt an emotional response – not to compose or illustrate – but to scenes to which they were intuitively drawn.

At the second workshop, the trainees selected four or five of their images for, again, anonymous presentation and discussion. Finally, they were asked to write 500–1,000 words, describing the significant insights they had recognised in their chosen pictures and to discuss what value they had received from the project. The pictures and the prose were analysed qualitatively and two themes emerged – that of 'being on a journey' and 'the need for balance'. Journey themes frequently referred to career pathways, and the obstacles and intersections involved in this. The need for balance highlighted a need for equilibrium in their lives, between competing demands of family, work and community. The opportunities to take time to listen to the inner self and to challenge self doubts were appreciated. Feedback suggested that all the trainees felt the project had helped to develop their skills in reflection.

This study highlights that encouraging reflection in a wider sense has greater benefits than using it narrowly to think about 'daily practice and duties'.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2018.899