

OP-30: Authentic learning environments through simulated crime scene investigation for medical undergraduates and stakeholders in the criminal justice system

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Introduction: Forensic medical experts, magistrates, inquirers into sudden deaths and police officers are required to examine, collect evidence and prepare reports based on crime scene investigations (CSI). Some of them formulate relevant, crucial, high impact opinions. Simulated CSI which was introduced five years ago at the Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology (DFMT), Faculty of Medicine, Colombo for the first time in a Sri Lankan University setting, is an authentic learning activity since it simulates the real-life scenario. This paper reflects upon the experiences gained in implementing simulated CSI as a teaching tool, and will present participant feedback of one such activity.

Methods: Diverse simulated crime scene scenarios are used, with mannequins having injuries or artefacts created through moulage. The participants observe, describe, synthesise, interpret the information gathered and formulate conclusions. Participants are divided into two groups; one performs the simulated CSI while the other observes and critically analyses their performance. The same format is used regardless of whether the participants are from a medical or non-medical background. Feedback through online surveys obtained from simulated CSI are presented and are used for further improvement.

Results: The resource persons were able to improve the simulated CSI teaching activity through formal and informal feedback obtained from participants. In one simulated CSI, 11 out of 30 participants responded to an online feedback form. While 7/11 stated that objectives were clearly communicated prior to activity, the extent of overall objectives met at the activity was rated as excellent or very good by 10/11. Some specific objectives were rated as not being fulfilled adequately. All rated the level of satisfaction regarding facilitation of the activity as very good. While the majority felt that the concept of scene was excellent, the physical design and injuries created on mannequins received a lower rating.

Conclusions: Authentic learning environments using CSI have achieved the objectives of CSI teaching and are recommended for teaching and training of stakeholders within the criminal justice system. While facilitation has been rated very good, some objectives need re-visiting and upgrading of the simulated learning activity.

Keywords: crime scene investigation, authentic learning, simulated crime scenes, moulage