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CAN JUNIOR DOCTORS LEARN ABOUT PAIN MANAGEMENT THROUGH E-LEARNING?

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Background The management of serious life limiting illnesses spans across all specialities in medicine. One of the crucial goals for both patients and professionals is the effective management of pain. It is therefore vital for all doctors to have an insight into the basics of pain management.

E-learning is an innovative way of teaching. It provides flexible access to learning which can be used to target a wide range of doctors.

Aim To evaluate the effectiveness of e-learning in improving the pain knowledge of Foundation 1 doctors.

Method Foundation 1 doctors in Sunderland Royal Hospital were recruited in August 2010 at their induction programme. An e-learning module was constructed based on their curriculum and regional guidelines. The module started in November 2010 for 1 month. Pre and post module questionnaires as well as evaluation forms were completed by learners.

Results 14 foundation doctors initially agreed to participate in the module. 36% completed the course. The mean pre-module score was 62% (95% Confidence interval 53–70%). The mean post-module score was 77% (95% confidence interval 67–86%, $P=0.042$). There was also a mean improvement of 1.0 point on the Likert scale evaluating confidence in pain management.

Discussion Our results have shown that an e-learning module on pain specifically targeted to foundation doctors can improve both confidence in different areas of pain management as well knowledge. There was however a high attrition rate at 64% despite regular contact. The motivation of learners and their inherent interest may account for this.

Limitations Questions in the pre and post module questionnaires have not been formally validated.

Conclusion This study has shown that it is possible to improve the pain knowledge of foundation doctors through an e-learning package. Barriers in accessing e-learning need to be evaluated to target a wider range of doctors.