

Involvement of experts by experience in academic assessments for undergraduate nursing students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Observed structured clinical exams simulate real life practices in the clinical area, to enable students to show their knowledge, attitudes and skills in a safe environment (Lavery, 2022). However, increasing authenticity and fidelity within the assessment process requires actors with learning disabilities to support with the design, implementation and providing feedback to students. Involvement of people with learning disabilities increases authenticity, parity of esteem and enables a more reliable assessment of students ability for safe, person-centered and effective care (Buchan, 2016; Haycock-Stuart et al., 2016). Furthermore, "Nothing about me without me" highlighted how healthcare education should involve people with lived experience in the assessment process (Rowland et al., 2019). Involving actors with learning disabilities offer students the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and values aligned to the profession, specifically around communication and involvement of patients in decision making.

## THE METHOD

Approval was granted from Northumbria University online ethics system (reference number 6316).

Final year nursing students and the actor with a learning disability were asked to complete a survey about their perceptions and experience of involving a person with learning disabilities in the OSCE. The survey consisted of open ended and Likert type questions. Students had the option to complete the survey online or in a paper format and the actor provided with support for an independent staff member following the OSCE. No student identifiers were requested and students were all provided with information and debrief sheets to explain their rights before agreeing to participate.

## RESULTS

Eight students (73%) completed the survey. All students reported that they found the inclusion of an actor with a learning disability as positive. Students expressed that it helped them to forge stronger links to practice, was more relatable and helped them to see the person as central to the process. Students perceived the actor with a learning disability as increasing the authenticity and fidelity of the OSCE, as they needed to adapt to the person, their needs and abilities in a person centred way. This included awareness of appropriate communication and communication aids. The students self-reported that the increased realism impacted on their anxiety levels, some finding it increased and some found the OSCE to be more aligned to practice therefore they felt calmer, more confident and relaxed. An emotionally and socially safe space was provided by familiar and supportive staff, experts by experience, breaks in between stations and fewer people in the room which again helped to reduce anxiety. The preparation for the OSCE may have reduced anxiety levels if experts by experience had been used in formative assessments.

The expert by experience rated the value and enjoyment of supporting the OSCE as 5 out of 5 stars and explained how she enjoyed seeing the full journey of students from interviewing them at the start of their journey to the final OSCE at the end of the programme. Furthermore, the importance of the role was evident and captured in the declaration that all fields should experience an OSCE where experts by experience are involved in designing, facilitating and providing feedback.

## RECOMMENDATIONS.

- For pre-registration nursing programmes to include people who use services in the design and implementation of assessments.
- To provide people with learning disabilities the support to provide feedback and be included in the evaluation of student performance.
- To carefully consider how the OSCE team can promote the feeling of a safe space for both the person with learning disabilities and the students.

### IMPORTANCE OF A SAFE SPACE



#### References.