

# The Role of Clinical Teaching Fellows in Ophthalmology

## Near-Peer Teaching to Bridge a Clinical Skills Gap

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## INTRODUCTION

### Ophthalmology is a skills-heavy specialty with limited undergraduate exposure

Many medical students and junior doctors feel **underprepared and overwhelmed** when entering ophthalmology rotations

Near-peer teaching - where learners are taught by clinicians within 4–5 years senior to them - has been shown to improve:

- 1) Confidence
- 2) Engagement
- 3) skill acquisition.

Clinical Teaching Fellows (CTFs), positioned between students and senior specialists, are uniquely placed to deliver accessible, practical ophthalmology education. Their recent experience, clinical competence, and availability make them ideal near-peer educators, bridging gaps in traditional teaching and fostering a psychologically safe learning environment.

## AIM

To explore learners' perceptions of near-peer ophthalmology teaching delivered by a Clinical Teaching Fellow

## METHODS

### Teaching Delivered:

- Slit lamp examination
- Fundoscopy techniques – both on patients and on the Eyesi VR Simulator
- OSCE preparation – history taking and examination
- Clinic-based Discussions and much more!

Feedback was collected via post-session questionnaires assessing learner comfort and engagement.

## RESULTS

# 93%

of learners reported  
**greater comfort & engagement**

n = 56

✓ Increased willingness to ask questions

✓ Reduced anxiety in clinical settings

✓ Improved confidence using slit lamps and ophthalmic equipment

✓ First-time experience of using an ophthalmoscope on a real dilated patient for many

*"(CTFs) took away the fear of looking foolish in front of a 'black lanyard' which helped me feel less anxious...asking questions to someone closer to my level felt safer"*

## DISCUSSION

### The 'Goldilocks Zone'

CTFs occupy a unique position - experienced enough to teach confidently, yet approachable and embedded in day-to-day service

### Mutual Benefit

Teaching reinforces CTF knowledge, develops communication skills, and builds leadership capabilities for future supervision roles

### Skills Gap in Ophthalmology

Visual and equipment-dependent skills require hands-on teaching, which CTFs are ideally positioned to provide, freeing up clinicians time

## Why Clinical Teaching Fellows?



## CONCLUSIONS

- ✓ Clinical Teaching Fellows are effective near-peer educators in ophthalmology
- ✓ Near-peer teaching improves learner confidence and reduces anxiety
- ✓ Fellows help bridge a critical clinical skills gap in ophthalmology clinical skills training
- ✓ Formal integration of fellows into teaching structures should be encouraged

## REFERENCES

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