

# Feasibility of Using Shadow-Box Simulation to Develop Socio-Cognitive Skills

## Training Senior Anaesthesia Resident Doctors for Consultancy

Drs N. Doody & V. Vallance, NHS Lanarkshire

### Introduction

A survey conducted amongst Scottish Anaesthetic consultants identified many challenges facing senior resident doctors taking up their consultant roles. These include decision-making fatigue, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and juggling the training needs of residents with list management responsibilities (1).

### Aim

To address this, we developed a table-top simulation session using shadow-box methodology which formed part of a pilot Consultant Readiness course delivered to anaesthesia residents in their final year of training.

### Methods

Groups of six candidates with two expert facilitators worked through 2 paper-based and two video-based shadow-box scenarios. Question prompts from the facilitators at each progression point led to discussion amongst the candidates about possible courses of action. Candidate feedback was collected on the usefulness of this session post-course.



### Scenarios

- 1. Rationalising an overrunning theatre list and balancing priorities of different team members*
- 2. Dealing with a resident with difficulties*
- 3. Responsibility for on-the-day cancellation of a patient*
- 4. Being dismissed by a fellow Consultant in your department*



### Results/Discussion

The simulation scenarios were well received, with 90% of candidates describing the session as 'very useful', as it explored areas not covered by the anaesthetic curriculum. In one group, a consultant surgeon was present as a facilitator, which enriched the discussions by providing an alternative viewpoint. 68% of respondents thought the session could be improved by including candidates from surgical specialties.

### Conclusion

Shadow-box methodology is well suited for the exploration of the socio-cognitive skills and behaviours required of new consultants. We plan to include resident doctors from various surgical specialties in the future, to allow for inter-professional learning of team skills with the aim of lessening inter-specialty conflict in the workplace.

### References

- Doody, N.C. and Vallance, V. (2026), Modifiable stressors during transition from resident to consultant. Anaesthesia. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anae.70002>

### Contacts

[Nicola.Doody@Lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Nicola.Doody@Lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)  
[Vanessa.Vallance@Lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Vanessa.Vallance@Lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)