

Psych Sim on Wheels!

Multidisciplinary mental health simulation in the Outer Hebrides

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Introduction

The Scottish Government have committed to developing a Remote and Rural Workforce Strategy, which aims to support the needs of people living and working in rural and island communities.

Although there is awareness that loneliness and isolation can significantly impact mental health and wellbeing in remote areas, it has been noted that many healthcare professionals in these areas do not have mental health training.

Methods

The Mobile Skills Unit (MSU), is a mobile training unit with immersive simulation facilities. Between 2023–2024, the MSU was used to deliver 5 half-day psychiatry simulation courses to multidisciplinary staff working in the Outer Hebrides.

The courses comprised three 15-minute scenarios (including deliberate self-harm, delirium tremens, psychosis, aggression and collateral mental health history), followed by a 30-minute debrief. Feedback was collected via anonymous pre- and post-course questionnaires.

Results & Discussion

22 participants attended the courses from a range of disciplines, including medical students, junior doctors, GPs, inpatient and community nursing staff, a healthcare assistant and paramedic.

Participants highlighted specific challenges in managing acute mental illness in rural settings including limited staffing, inappropriate care environments and difficulties transferring patients off the islands.

The majority of participants noted an increase in confidence in undertaking the mental health scenarios after the course. They found the simulated scenarios realistic, and debriefs were beneficial in enhancing their learning.

Participants universally agreed the course increased their preparedness to deal with similar scenarios in a rural healthcare setting. The course was praised for its inclusion of non-medical staff, and all participants agreed it was appropriate for their learning needs.

Conclusions

Healthcare workers from different professional backgrounds highlighted specific challenges in managing patients with mental health problems in remote and rural areas.

Course participants valued the opportunity provided by simulation to improve their confidence and develop skills in managing acute psychiatric presentations.

Acknowledgements

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