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Getting to the core of medicine: Developing undergraduate forensic medicine and pathology teaching

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Getting to the core of medicine: developing undergraduate forensic medicine and pathology teaching

Abstract

Teaching and learning of forensic medicine and pathology in the undergraduate medical curriculum has been in decline for decades in the UK, and yet graduates are expected to be able to recognise, and protect, those who are most vulnerable in society – i.e. at risk of abuse or neglect - a matter highly relevant to the role of the forensic medical practitioner.

When Cardiff University School of Medicine created a new 'learner-centred' undergraduate curriculum, championing case-based discussion in small groups, and earlier clinical contact, residual teaching on 'the pathology of trauma' disappeared. An opportunity to create a new course for the year 3 core curriculum, however, led to re-emergence of forensic medicine and pathology, with a focus on identification, and protection, of the 'vulnerable patient'.

This paper describes the development process of the first two iterations of that course, and the influence of 'listening to the student voice'.

Forensic medicine and pathology remain relevant in undergraduate medical education; effective, and ethical, safeguarding of the vulnerable is an essential 'core' skill of the modern medical graduate, and forensic medical practitioners can play an integral role in the preparation of medical students for their future clinical practice.

Keywords: forensic medicine, forensic pathology, medical education, safeguarding, vulnerable populations

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