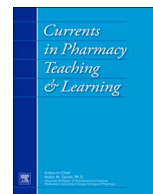




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/cptl](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/cptl)

Experiences in Teaching and Learning

## Students views of an online ethical decision-support tool

Maria Donna Allinson\*, Patricia Black

Hornbeam Building, School of Pharmacy, Keele University, Staffordshire ST5 5BG, United Kingdom

## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Values Exchange  
Decision-support  
Pharmacy education  
Ethics

## ABSTRACT

**Background and purpose:** Ethical reasoning is a key skill that must be developed during the undergraduate pharmacy course to prepare students for ethical decision-making in future practice as pharmacy professionals. In this initial study, we sought and documented the views of pharmacy students at a United Kingdom (UK) university on the use of Values Exchange™ (Vx), an online ethical decision-support tool.

**Educational activity and setting:** Students deliberated on up to three ethical case scenarios every academic year using the tool. A preliminary study using a qualitative methodology was conducted with students nearing the end of their third-year of study to explore their views of the tool. Two focus groups were used to collect the data. Discussions were digitally recorded, anonymised and transcribed verbatim. Data was analysed using the five-stage framework approach.

**Findings:** Four main themes emerged from the data: students felt that Values Exchange™ enabled them to gain a wider perspective on ethical issues; it promoted reflection; it helped to prepare them for future practice; students liked the online environment.

**Discussion:** Vx prompted students to deliberate on many facets of a case, enabled them to consider and challenge the views of their peers, facilitated reflection and promoted greater honesty in responses and inclusivity, all supporting the development of moral reasoning skills.

**Summary:** Vx supports the process of ethical decision-making, encouraging a deep approach to learning within a safe virtual environment. Students believed Vx to be an effective tool for developing ethical reasoning skills in preparation for practice.

## Background and purpose

Ethical decision-making in professions such as pharmacy has been described as the balancing of rights, duties, prima facie principles and legalities.<sup>1</sup> Both pharmacists and pharmacy students in the United Kingdom (UK) are expected to abide by the professional standards set by the professional regulator, the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC).<sup>2</sup> The fifth principle of the GPhC's standards states that pharmacists must use their professional judgement to deliver safe and effective care. Furthermore, the first learning outcome stipulated by the GPhC for the initial education and training of pharmacists is that a pharmacy professional must be able to recognise ethical dilemmas and respond in accordance with relevant codes of conduct.<sup>3</sup> Ethical decision-making is a key skill that must be developed throughout the years of undergraduate study to prepare students for all aspects of future pharmacy practice.

It is generally acknowledged that ethics is difficult to teach.<sup>4</sup> This is believed in part to be due to the perception that ethics is an intangible subject, there are not necessarily right or wrong answers, teaching may address processes rather than knowledge and it aims to ultimately change behaviour. The theory-practice gap is difficult to bridge and students have previously found it difficult to

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [m.d.allinson@keele.ac.uk](mailto:m.d.allinson@keele.ac.uk) (M.D. Allinson), [p.e.black@keele.ac.uk](mailto:p.e.black@keele.ac.uk) (P. Black).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2017.10.008>

1877-1297/© 2017 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

apply their learning in real-life situations.<sup>5</sup>

Values Exchange™ (Vx) is an online ethical decision-support tool that uses an analytical framework to facilitate a values-based approach to applied ethics education. Vx is underpinned by a values-based theory of decision-making, with the primary goal of values transparency.<sup>6</sup> The tool is process-orientated and aims to enable students to think deeply about issues present in an ethical dilemma, helping them to justify their decisions. Short-term use of Vx has been evaluated in both undergraduate and postgraduate education but students in this current study had more extensive use, having completed cases using Vx over the first three years of a Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) undergraduate degree course.<sup>7-9</sup>

This paper reports on an initial study, the purpose of which was to ascertain the views of pharmacy students on the use of Vx as a tool for supporting and developing ethical reasoning skills within undergraduate education.

## Educational activity and setting

As part of the MPharm degree course, all students were required to complete at least two cases using Vx, with the option for a third case in every academic year. This was a component of the professional development strand of teaching. Topics chosen for deliberation related to both specific pharmacy issues, for example, whether or not to supply a controlled drug to a terminally ill patient without a prescription, and also wider societal issues such as assisted suicide. The system allows any case to be uploaded so individual scenarios can be specific to any healthcare system across the world. Topics were chosen, where possible, to complement concurrent teaching in related areas (e.g., law surrounding controlled drugs). One member of staff (MA) was responsible for planning and delivering teaching using Vx and three additional members of staff were involved with marking assessments. Technical support was provided by the developer of Vx when required.

Vx is an interactive platform that provides a framework using traditional theoretical approaches in everyday language to support students to develop justified reasons to their ethical stance on a case. Students were allocated two weeks in the middle of the first semester to complete their cases individually online. They accessed a case and were required to consider whether they initially agreed or disagreed with an outcome statement regarding it. They were then supported in deepening their analysis of the case by working through a “Reactions section” where they were provided with prompts to consider any ideals, emotions, hopes, duty, fears, and rights in relation to the case in hand (see [Appendix 1](#)). This was followed by a “Reasons section” where they were asked to explain the underpinning reasons in defence of their decision. Following completion of the cases, students could access their own and others’ responses.

Following this period of personal deliberation, students were encouraged to view the responses of their peers and were allocated three weeks to challenge and debate with them via online discussion boards, also accessible via the Vx platform. Assessment was via a written reflection on the experience, and students were required to pass this to progress to the next year of the MPharm course.

## Methodology and methods

This was a preliminary, descriptive study conducted using an exploratory inductive approach. A qualitative method was employed (focus groups) to explore students’ views on their use of Vx. Focus groups were chosen as it was perceived that students would feel less inhibited in a group than in a one-to-one interview.

Ethical approval to undertake the study was requested from the University's Research Ethics Committee. The Committee advised that approval was not required for an evaluation of teaching.

## Participants

Invitations to participate in the study were emailed to all students (n=104) nearing the end of their third-year of study in the MPharm course. They had all completed the same course using Vx over the previous three years. Nine students volunteered to participate. Two were non-traditional students (one male, one female and both aged > 40 years). Seven of the nine students were female. The ethnic mix was three British Caucasian, three British Asian, one European, one Black African and one Chinese. All those who volunteered were included in the study.

## Focus groups

Two focus groups (n = 4 and n = 5) were conducted by MA in March 2014. MA was responsible for delivering teaching and learning via Vx and, therefore, an ‘insider researcher’. This has been defended as a valid and useful approach.<sup>10</sup> Both focus groups lasted approximately 50 min. The discussions were digitally recorded to enable full, verbatim transcription. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and informed consent for the electronic recording of the discussion was obtained.

A topic guide consisting of key questions with prompts was developed based on both literature findings and the researcher's personal knowledge of Vx (see [Appendix 2](#)). The topic guide was piloted on an experienced researcher and a fourth-year student. As a result, minor amendments were applied to the guide. The topics covered included experiences of navigating and using Vx, the effectiveness of Vx as a tool to support ethical decision-making and potential improvements to the tool.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6840091>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6840091>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)