

Covid-19 PGME Training Recovery School of Ophthalmology – Simulation

In the North East and North Cumbria, the School of Ophthalmology has used various simulation products to enhance surgical training, and help minimise COVID-related extensions.

Background

During the pandemic, opportunities for trainees to attend surgical training were restricted, presenting a risk of skills reduction and consequential training extensions. Simulation products, such as the Cataract Surgical Simulator, became particularly important during this time to ensure trainees could still acquire these surgical skills.

Analysis of previous Royal College examination data, specifically the Refraction exam, has shown that some trainees struggle to pass this particular exam. The School has provided trainees with the opportunity for additional training and practice prior to sitting this exam, through the purchase of simulation artificial eyes.

Cataract simulator and Retinoscopy artificial eyes

The Cataract Surgical Simulator has been used by the School to help trainees continue to develop and practice their surgical skills, despite reduced surgical training opportunities throughout the pandemic. This has had benefits for both training and for patient safety, helping trainees to acquire the competencies and confidence required for performing cataract operations.

The artificial eye in Retinoscopy has allowed trainees to practice their procedural skills, which has been important preparation for the Refraction exam, an area which doctors had previously struggled to pass. The kit has equipped doctors with the required exam capabilities and practice prior to the exam, developing confidence and reducing the risk of training extensions.

The School has also purchased operative microscopes for cataract surgery simulation, which have helped with 1:1 simulation in a wet lab setting and provided the opportunity for junior trainees in particular to develop their surgical competencies.

HEE North East has worked with the host trust to replace and provide maintenance for the equipment, to ensure continuity of simulation training for trainees.

Supporting training recovery

The interventions have helped to minimise the number of training extensions needed, with the most recent ARCPs resulting in only one doctor requiring a training extension. The use of these simulation products has helped doctors maintain surgical skills despite reduced operative numbers, evidenced by the School's pass rates in the Royal College examinations,

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