

What is already known on this topic

Worldwide, few potentially eligible patients are approached about entry into clinical trials; healthcare professionals find discussing trials and obtaining truly informed consent difficult

Patients are often confused or unclear about the experimental nature of treatment in trials

What this study adds

A training course was designed specifically to help health professionals provide clear information about phase III randomised trials of cancer treatments to patients and to encourage them to approach all eligible patients for recruitment

The course increased participants' reported self confidence about recruiting patients into trials, and objective analyses revealed improvements in the style and content of the participants' discussions

Wales, and research to see if real patient outcomes are affected is planned.

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focus on their own perceived areas of difficulty and makes the course work pertinent to their needs.⁷

We have used these types of “trigger” tapes successfully in our previous research with nurses and doctors working in oncology.^{6,7} The intervention reported here was valued highly by all participants.

The positive findings from the course included an increase in participants' reported self confidence about recruiting patients into trials, and objective analyses revealed behavioural changes in the style and content of the participants' discussions. There is strong evidence that if both competence and self confidence are improved then behavioural changes often do transfer successfully into the clinical setting and endure, even without support or consolidation courses.^{7,8}

Our training course is now being rolled out by the national cancer research networks in England and

Teaching of cultural diversity in medical schools in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland: cross sectional questionnaire survey

Nisha Dogra, Sue Connin, Paramjit Gill, John Spencer, Margot Turner

Over the past decade, pressure to teach about cultural diversity in the medical undergraduate curriculum has increased.^{1,2} *Tomorrow's doctors* states that “students should have acquired respect for patients and colleagues that encompasses, without prejudice, diversity of background and opportunity, language, culture and way of life.”¹ In this study, we used ethnicity as an example of cultural diversity, but we acknowledge the importance of other factors. We aimed to identify the extent to which cultural diversity was being taught in medical schools in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland.

Participants, methods, and results

We devised a study specific questionnaire that asked a series of closed questions plus some open ended questions inviting free text responses. We sent this to contacts in all medical schools in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (n=31 at the time of the study). We followed up non-respondents by a further letter and emails. We entered data into SPSS and did a content analysis of the free text responses.

University of Leicester,
Greenwood
Institute of Child
Health, Leicester
LE3 0QU
Nisha Dogra
senior lecturer in child
and adolescent
psychiatry
continued over

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East Kent Hospitals
NHS Trust, Kent
Sue Conning
educational adviser

University of
Birmingham,
Birmingham
Paramjit Gill
*clinical senior lecturer
in general practice*

University of
Newcastle,
Newcastle upon
Tyne

John Spencer
*professor in primary
care*

St George's Medical
School, London
Margot Turner
*community placement
developer*

Correspondence to:
N Dogra
nd13@le.ac.uk

Responses to yes/no item questions (n=30/31; response rate=97%). Values are numbers (percentages)*

Item	Yes	No	Not applicable	Not known
Does your school provide formal teaching in cultural diversity?	23 (72)	7 (22)	2 (6)	0
Does your school provide formal teaching in cultural sensitivity/multicultural issues?	26 (81)	6 (19)	0	0
Is the course a standalone course?	5 (16)	21 (66)	6 (19)	0
Is it part of a larger course?	23 (72)	2 (6)	7 (22)	0
Is the teaching part of the core curriculum?	24 (75)	3 (9)	5 (16)	0
SSMs/SSCs	16 (50)	11 (34)	5 (16)	0
Is student self study expected?	18 (56)	8 (25)	5 (16)	1 (3)
Does formative or summative assessment take place?	19 (59)	6 (19)	5 (16)	2 (6)
Formative	9 (28)			
Summative	10 (31)			
Is student feedback gathered?	23 (72)	4 (13)	5 (16)	0
Is there teaching about specific ethnic groups?	13 (41)	13 (41)	5 (16)	1 (3)
Are different ethnic groups used to plan teaching?	20 (63)	5 (16)	6 (19)	1 (3)
Are different ethnic groups used to deliver teaching?	18 (56)	6 (19)	7 (22)	1 (3)
Are there plans for further development?	18 (56)	9 (28)	Under development, 4 (13)	1 (3)

SSM=special study module; SSC=student selected component.

*Denominator for percentages is 32, as two medical schools completed questionnaires for both their four year and five year programmes.

Thirty (97%) medical schools responded to the questionnaires; 32 questionnaires were returned, as two medical schools completed questionnaires for both their four year and five year programmes. The table shows the items to which yes/no responses were possible.

Teaching and assessment methods

Fourteen (44%) schools used three or fewer teaching methods, and 11 (34%) used four or five methods. The most commonly used teaching methods were small group based teaching (21), discussions (16), lectures (16), problem based learning (11), community placements (9), and workshops (8).

Ten (31%) respondents stated that their school used only one assessment method; six (19%) respondents used two methods, and five (16%) used three methods. Nine (28%) respondents stated that the question was not applicable. The most commonly used methods were short answer questions (8 schools), essays (7), objective structured clinical examinations (6), and projects (5). Other assessment methods were used by three or fewer schools.

Thirteen (41%) respondents stated that cultural diversity was integrated throughout the curriculum. Eight (25%) respondents stated that cultural diversity was taught in the first year; we received one (3%) positive response for each of years two, three, four, and five. Very positive or positive feedback was reported by 18 (56%) respondents.

Findings from the free text

We identified the following themes from the free text comments: staff related factors (how staff were valued, as well as their difficulties in managing the organisation and delivery of diversity teaching); students' perceptions and evaluation of courses; contents and organisation of the course (the time allocated, where the course was placed, and how teaching was organised); and delivery and outcomes of the course.

Comment

Some progress seems to have been made since the publication of a survey in 1995,³ in that 72% of schools now report some teaching in cultural diversity. However, the number of respondents reporting that their school is teaching cultural diversity compares unfavourably with the United States,⁴ albeit more favourably than Canada.⁵ Teaching of cultural diversity has been developed in the United Kingdom but seems rather fragmented. A great deal of uncertainty seems to exist about what constitutes diversity teaching.

This study has limitations in that it was a questionnaire survey and the terminology used may not have matched the terminology of the schools. The staff who returned the questionnaires might not have been best placed to complete them. Nevertheless, the survey presents a snapshot of the state of teaching of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland in 2003. Further work is needed to embed teaching of cultural diversity within the medical undergraduate curriculum and to ensure that it is valued by staff and students.

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What is already known on this topic

Until recently, little attention has been paid to teaching medical students about cultural diversity

What this study adds

Teaching of cultural diversity is being developed but seems rather fragmented

Uncertainty remains as to what constitutes cultural diversity teaching