

Using a Student Selected Component as an opportunity to improve knowledge about potentially under-served groups and promote the specialty of Rehabilitation Medicine

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Student Selected Components (SSCs), or Student Selected Modules (SSMs) enable "students to study areas of particular interest to them [1]."

"Understanding the healthcare needs of those living with disability" was offered as an SSC option to second year medical students at St George's University in Autumn 2018.

The SSC was proposed and administered by a Rehabilitation Medicine trainee.

SSC aims

To improve understanding of the:

- differing models of disability
- physical, psychological and social impacts of acquired disability
- function of the multi-disciplinary team in rehabilitation delivery
- global impact of disability and global disability action plan
- disability rights movement in the UK

Although there are 13.9 disabled* people living in the UK, there is no compulsion for disability studies to form part of the medical school curriculum [2].

Students:

- were allocated a patient participating in in-patient rehab, whose journey was followed
- visited relevant third sector organisations
- attended vocational rehabilitation sessions
- participated in seminars, including:
 - History of the disability movement in the UK and abroad
 - Learning disabilities (LD) and access to healthcare (delivered by the LD Clinical Nurse Specialist)
 - The role of the Rehabilitation Medicine Physician and commissioning of services (delivered by the Rehabilitation Clinical Lead)

Assessment comprised of a 3000 word essay

Essay themes:

- Rehabilitation medicine and changing attitudes to disability in the UK and abroad
- Transition from paediatric to adult services for those with lifelong disability
- Role of the arts in Rehabilitation medicine
- Critical illness and rehabilitation

There is an opportunity for the medical school curriculum to reflect the likely increase in the disabled population, given the growing ageing population, and incidence and prevalence of chronic disease.

On conclusion of the SSC, students undertook an anonymous survey:

- **Over half confirmed that they had not heard of Rehabilitation Medicine previously**

All students:

- found spending time with patients as the most valuable aspect of the SSC
- considered what they had learned during the SSC to be of use to them in the future
- would recommend the SSC to other students

Added value:

- Links forged with Disability Law Service, resulted in the Service offering free training sessions to Neurorehabilitation staff
- Introduced medical students to both the speciality of Rehabilitation medicine, multi-disciplinary working and the experience of patients with acquired disability
- Stimulated students' learning; with some arranging additional independent visits to third sector organisations and other Trusts

References:

1. General Medical Council. (1993). *Tomorrow's Doctors*. London
2. Disability facts and figures. (2017). Available online from: <https://www.scope.org.uk/media>

*People first language is now preferred