To what extent can a student Community First Responder scheme benefit the local community and healthcare students?

**Introduction**

In 2014, students from the University of Nottingham established a Community First Responder scheme in partnership with the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS). The scheme recruits students from all healthcare disciplines and trains them to a nationally recognised standard. Student volunteers then respond alongside EMAS to high priority 999 calls within the local community, bringing lifesaving equipment and knowledge to patients as soon as possible.

The principal aims of the scheme are:
- To provide the opportunity for all students to have a real impact on the lives of people within their community.
- To give future healthcare professionals the opportunity to witness and experience the progression of patients from primary to secondary care.
- To promote a multi-disciplinary healthcare approach, with inter-professional learning, by pairing volunteers from varied disciplines together on shifts.
- To establish a rounded peer support network of future healthcare professionals through collaborative mentoring and reflection.

**The need**

It is widely accepted in medical literature that for every minute delay in initiating effective Basic Life Support and defibrillation a patient in cardiac arrest has a 10% decrease in their chances of survival. Therefore, having increased numbers of trained responders in the community will help increase overall survival rates.

The recent 'Shape of Training' report into postgraduate medical education and training suggests a move towards full registration of medical students at the point of graduation rather than at the end of their FY1 year. This scheme will assist those healthcare students in attaining the confidence and competence levels required by the GMC for full registration as well as giving experience in the delivery of emergency care.

The Francis Report highlighted the need for multi-disciplinary teamwork and recognised that early exposure during undergraduate study can help build a better foundation for this in the future.

**Implementation**

The scheme was initiated by training 20 volunteers in a First Person On Scene (FPOS) qualification, a national award recognised by the Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care. Their training focused on:
- Basic Life Support
- Defibrillation
- Oxygen therapy
- Common medical emergencies

These volunteers then used vehicles leased by EMAS and fitted with communication, tracking and medical equipment to respond in Nottingham and Derby.

The scheme grew by recruiting more volunteers and upskilling existing volunteers to attend paediatric jobs and carry basic drugs and observation equipment.

The co-ordinator of the scheme has also been qualified to teach the FPOS course so the scheme can be as self-sufficient as possible.

**Conclusion**

The evidence above highlights that the University of Nottingham Community First Responder scheme has made a significant contribution to the provision of emergency medical care to the Nottinghamshire community. Members of the scheme have learnt to work together in multi-disciplinary pairs and have utilised each other’s knowledge and skills to enhance their own clinical development, benefitting not only themselves but the future patients they will care for.

**Future plans**

The scheme’s plan is for growth, with the recruitment and training of more volunteers, providing the ability to treat a greater number and wider variety of patients as experience within the group develops. Recruit a local sponsor to provide the financial backing required to keep the scheme operational. There is also an aspiration to make contact with other Universities with the aim of expanding the model beyond Nottingham, so that other communities and their students can benefit in the same way.

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