Session 2: Is Virtual Training Actually Better?

A Trainee Perspective

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Manchester MSc Changes

- Did not need to attend Manchester campus for lectures
- Timetable given for each module 1 week prior via email
- On blackboard, lecture material uploaded in advance and discussion board available to ask questions
- Lectures were a mix of pre-recorded & live sessions via zoom
- During live zoom sessions 'break-out rooms' and interactive platforms like Nearpod used for group work and quizzes
- Zoom rules: cameras on, microphones off and UoM account used for tracking attendance
- Questions could be asked via microphone or chat box
- Zoom also used for supervisor 1-2-1's (research project)

Advantages of Online Learning

- ✓ Didn't have to travel to Manchester
- ✓ Zoom was reliable and user-friendly
- ✓ Pre-recorded lectures allowed flexibility
- ✓ Live sessions translated well into online format
- ✓ The breakout rooms and Nearpod sessions alleviated pressure when giving answers
- ✓ Interactive sessions helped maintain concentration levels
- ✓ Lectures could run on longer if required (if no live lecture immediately after)

Disadvantages of Online Learning

- Various IT issues
  - Lecturers with lack of IT &/or online lecturing experience
  - Internet and software problems
- Breakout rooms only work well if students interact
- Difficult to stay motivated during full days of pre-recorded lectures
- Very little social interaction with uni peers
- If on site, may feel pressure to do other work during what should be protected study time

Genetics Rotation Changes

- 1st year genetics rotation took place online via MS Teams
- Timetable given with information on which topics were to be covered and by who
- Mix of live and pre-recorded presentations, as well as tasks e.g. Karyotyping on MS paint
- All presentations, tasks and related documents were shared on MS Teams to access anytime
- Questions could be asked over MS Teams or via email
- COMs, CBDs & DOPs uploaded to OneFile as normal

Advantages of Virtual Rotation

- ✓ Adaptable timetable - live and pre-recorded presentations could be rescheduled easily if required
- ✓ Comprehensive cover of the material
  - Covered many topics in a short space of time
  - Potentially more formal teaching time with clinical scientists than an in-person rotation would have
- ✓ Live sessions on MS Teams allowed us to ask questions and screen share if required
- ✓ If not given live, narrated presentations were provided which could be watched at own pace
- ✓ Were still able to attend relevant seminars and MDT meetings (online anyway)

Disadvantages of Virtual Rotation

- Various IT issues
- Less interactive than going into the lab
  - Miss out on hands-on lab experience and the chance to learn/practice scientific skills
  - Miss out on the opportunity to shadow BMS staff performing analytical techniques
- Less opportunity to attend patient clinics etc
- Can be difficult to write about techniques or processes that you haven't physically seen
- If on site, may be distracted by non-rotational workload

Conclusion:
Is Virtual Training Actually Better?

- The switch to virtual training was a response to the current COVID-19 pandemic
- General consensus in Glasgow is that it has been fairly successful, considering the speed at which trainers and trainees had to adapt to the changes
- Platforms like Zoom & MS Teams allows us to transfer many aspects of training online, while also saving time & money and providing flexibility & interactivity
- However, the main issue with a fully virtual rotation is the lack of hands-on lab experience
- Therefore, the ideal rotation may involve a mix of virtual and lab-based learning