

# Communication Skills with Children and Parents



## Introduction

*'It is essential that newly qualified doctors can competently interact with, assess and care for children and young people'<sup>1</sup>.*

Both the General Medical Council (GMC) and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) have produced expectations for undergraduate medical schools in relation to the teaching of communication skills with children and young people.

## Methods

This study assessed the self-reported competence of foundation doctors in paediatric communication skills. 96 questionnaires were distributed across Scotland and England in paper and electronic form, with both containing identical questions. Paper questionnaires were handed out at teaching sessions and administrators at different hospitals distributed a link to the online survey.

## Results

**35%** felt their undergraduate teaching was inadequate.

**41%** reported no formal undergraduate paediatric communication skills teaching.

**43%** had worked in a job involving contact with children thus far in their foundation years (GP / paediatrics / emergency medicine).

**56%** had been in a situation where they required communication skills with children and parents professionally.

Longer paediatric placements and completing a specialist study component in paediatrics were both associated with higher levels of confidence in paediatric specific communication skills.

## Conclusions

Despite regular contact with children and parents, foundation doctors report low confidence in paediatric communication skills.

This may be explained by the lack of undergraduate teaching.

Higher levels of confidence associated with increased paediatric exposure supports the argument for increasing allocated teaching time for communication skills in paediatric undergraduate curricula.

## Next Steps

Although a limited number of questionnaires were returned, this novel research should encourage those reviewing undergraduate curricula to consider the importance of meeting well established GMC and RCPCH expectations.

At the University of Central Lancashire, we plan to develop a **workshop** addressing the **specific communication challenges** arising within a consultation between **practitioner, child and parent**.

## References

1. Undergraduate Curriculum for Child Health. November 2015. Accessed on 12/5/17 at <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/system/files/protected/page/Undergraduate%20Curriculum%20for%20Child%20Health%20Nov.%202015.pdf>