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THE USE OF REFLECTIVE EPORTFOLIOS AS AN ASSESSMENT TOOL OF LEARNER DEVELOPMENT FROM UNDERGRADUATE THROUGH TO POSTGRADUATE STUDY

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PURPOSE

The ePortfolio is being increasingly utilised in medical school curricula and postgraduate training programmes to monitor the development and improvement of learners. Reflective ePortfolios have been used since 2013/14 in a two-year online part-time ChM in Urology programme, requiring postgraduate students to learn from professional experiences out with formal teaching. This year, we introduced a similar assessed ePortfolio to the new BMedSci Surgical Sciences course for undergraduate medical students. Here, we evaluate its perceived effectiveness in developing student autonomy and self-reflection skills.

METHODS

In 2017/18, students enrolled on the two courses ($n=12$ undergraduate and $n=12$ postgraduate) were asked to critically reflect on their experiences, actions and learning under the headings: Quality Improvement and Patient Care; Literature Evaluation Skills; Research and Experimental Design; Self-Learning Abilities and Habits; and, for ChM only, Teaching Skills. Anonymised, interim student feedback on the process has been gathered using online questionnaires.

RESULTS

Eleven students completed the questionnaire (46% response rate); undergraduate and postgraduate responses were essentially comparable. None of the respondents had any previous experience of keeping a portfolio; 11/11 indicated it is a new learning experience for them. Encouragingly, no-one declared an anxiety about revealing their weaknesses. The majority of respondents find the ePortfolio helps them reflect on their approach to study (82%) and identifies where they need to

improve (55%). Two-thirds (7/11) rate the ePortfolio as “beneficial and challenging”. Whilst 27% indicated that they found it “difficult and confusing”, most described it as “valuable” (73%).

CONCLUSION

Reflective ePortfolios provide opportunities to give students autonomy, and develop their learning across and between different courses, which they can continue into their postgraduate training and beyond. To be effective, teaching staff need to provide detailed guidance on the assessment requirements, such as exemplars, given that ePortfolios are likely to be a novel endeavour for many students.

300 words