

# Is virtual advance care planning simulation as effective as face-to-face learning?

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## Introduction

- Advanced care planning (ACP) enables patient's wishes to be respected
- This improves patients' experiences of their care and reduces relatives' bereavement reactions<sup>1</sup>
- A simulation course, The Elephant in the Room, was designed for healthcare professionals to improve understanding and confidence around ACP, using actors
- COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we learn, and course was adapted to being virtual<sup>2</sup>

## Method

- Anonymous questionnaires were completed by candidates before and after simulation sessions
- They rated how confident they were having ACP discussions, using a Likert scale
- Candidates were asked 'How do you feel about attending the course online?'; free-text responses were analyzed qualitatively
- Themes were identified and agreed by two authors
- Data was collected 2018-2022 and sessions were divided into virtual and face-to-face

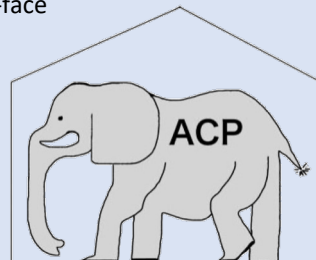


Figure 1: Logo for The Elephant in the Room

## Results

Mean confidence scores before and after simulation course

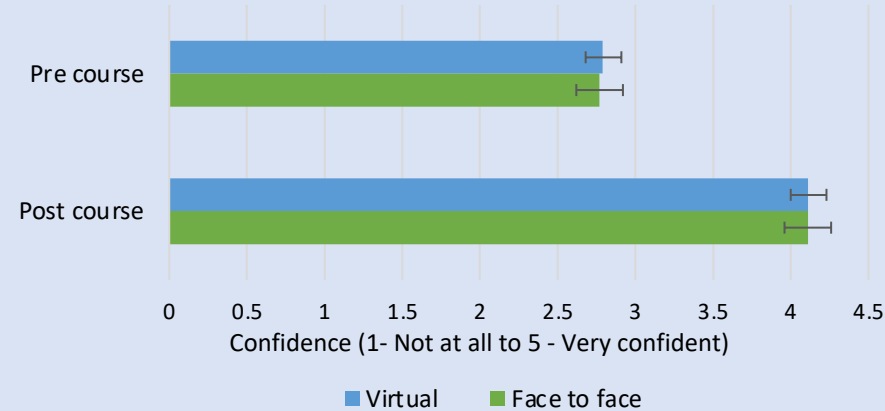
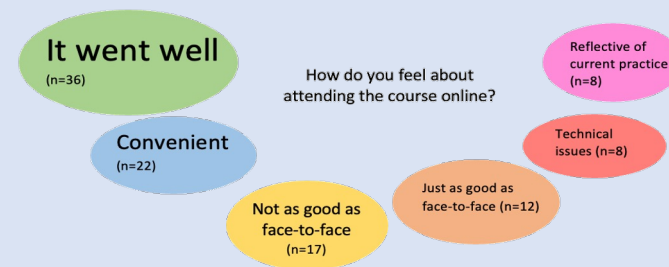


Figure 2 (above): participants' confidence scores in having ACP discussions

- 133 participants were trained online and 128 face-to-face
- Confidence improved significantly and this was unaffected by format
- 97% of face-to-face and 99.2% of online trainees reported practice would change as a result
- 100% of participants reported fully understanding ACP after the course from a baseline of 80% pre-course (n=281)



## Discussion

- Other studies also found that digital learning is generally as effective<sup>3,4</sup> as traditional methods and has its role as part of a hybrid model of learning<sup>4</sup>
- There are many different styles of learning so certain formats may appeal to some more than others
- Technology is a growing part of healthcare and so it is important to incorporate this into learning<sup>5</sup>
- Limitations include that all participants self-selected by signing up to the course which suggests an interest in ACP
- Another limitation was the data was collected over 4 years so the circumstances were significantly different at the height of the covid-19 pandemic compared to before this, or the present day, hence, the virtual course may not always be 'reflective' of clinical practice

## Conclusion

- Simulation represents a useful tool to improve healthcare professionals' confidence in ACP and should be widely offered
- The course was successfully reformatted to being online
- Participants found the online course more accessible
- In future, running both face-to-face and virtual versions may appeal to different learning styles

Figure 3 (left): Key themes from participants' free-text responses and frequency