



How equipped are first year undergraduate students in navigating common teamwork challenges?

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Introduction. Effective communication and collaboration underpin effective teamwork skills and are essential to the pharmaceutical science workforce (Cooper et al., 2022). Teamwork does not occur as a consequence of putting people together. Students require guidance, teaching, and mentorship to develop these skills. A survey instrument tool (Baseline Teamwork Assessment Tool) was developed at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at Monash University in 2021 to measure baseline teamwork skills in students. The tool was administered to first year Pharmaceutical Science students in 2021 (onshore: n=192; offshore: n=42) at the beginning of the academic year.

Aims. To characterise the baseline teamwork aptitudes of 1st year undergraduate Pharmaceutical Science students using free text survey responses to a 3-part teamwork scenario.

Methods. Existing literature on common teamwork attributes in students was reviewed using PubMed & CINAHL search engines. Backward citation searching was used to shortlist 7 articles (of ~293) published in 1999-2015 for further analysis. From these, 11 deductive themes were identified on common strategies utilised by students to navigate common teamwork challenges. Subsequently, inductive thematic analysis was adopted in the coding of a subset of the available data (n=30). This resulted in the identification of 3 additional themes to a total of 16 themes.

Results. The theme of “Understanding” was common throughout student responses, indicating their intentions to evaluate the problem to find an appropriate solution, and their care and empathy for team members. “Awareness” was also common, as students wanted to clarify the situation. “Compromise” demonstrates students’ common belief that individual behaviour can be changed with the right environment and support. “Correcting behaviour” was seen often, as students demonstrated the intention to inform peers of their own beliefs about how teamwork should be performed and the responsibilities of each team member.

Discussion. This study identifies common strategies used by students to navigate common teamwork challenges and also highlights areas student lack the knowledge and skills overcome barriers to effective teamwork. Findings from this study will be used to develop resources and instructions to support the development and cultivation of teamwork skills in undergraduate students.