

# It's time to think small! Evaluation of feedback from paediatric experiential placements

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## Background

The Lady Cilento Children's Hospital (LCCH) pharmacy department provides tertiary paediatric experiential placements to undergraduate students, intern pharmacists working in adult hospitals and registered pharmacists caring for paediatric patients in non-metropolitan hospitals.

The objectives of these placements are to provide a state-wide training and education in this area of specialised practice and to optimise care for children by enhancing the paediatric expertise of pharmacists across the state.

## Aim

A retrospective evaluation of feedback received from students, intern pharmacists and registered pharmacists who undertook an experiential placement at LCCH during 2016 and 2017.

## Methods

Visitor categories and placement durations were recorded. Visitors completed placement evaluation forms (Figure 1) at the end of their placements, and feedback with descriptive statistics and free-type comments were collected. The descriptive statistics were used to present quantitative data, and the free-type comments were used to identify common themes by thematic analysis.

Figure 1: Placement evaluation form

## Result

A total of 67 paediatric placements were provided with average durations of 19.7 days (32 students), 4.7 days (27 interns) and 3.7 days (8 pharmacists). A total of 59 evaluation forms were received, from 29 students, 24 interns and six pharmacists (Figure 2).

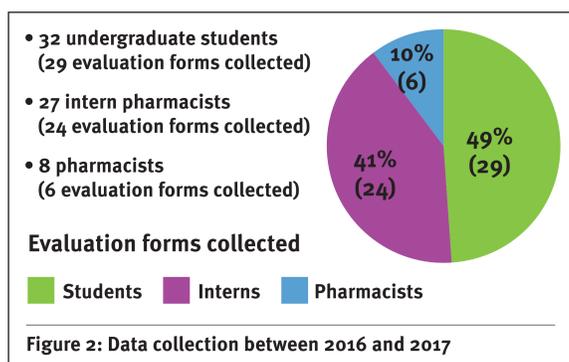


Figure 2: Data collection between 2016 and 2017

- All respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the placement was valuable, relevant and practical; of suitable format; and improved their understanding of paediatrics (Figures 3, 4 and 5).
- 'Clinical knowledge' and 'learning style' were the two common themes derived from the feedback from all respondents (Figures 3, 4 and 5). In general:

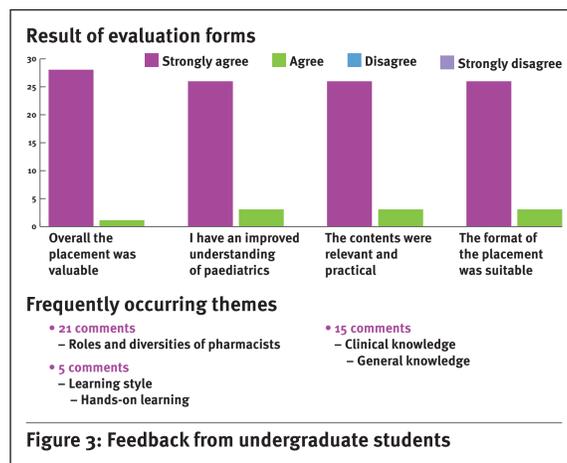


Figure 3: Feedback from undergraduate students

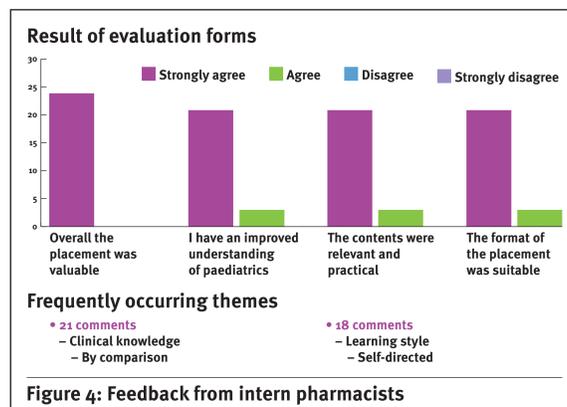


Figure 4: Feedback from intern pharmacists

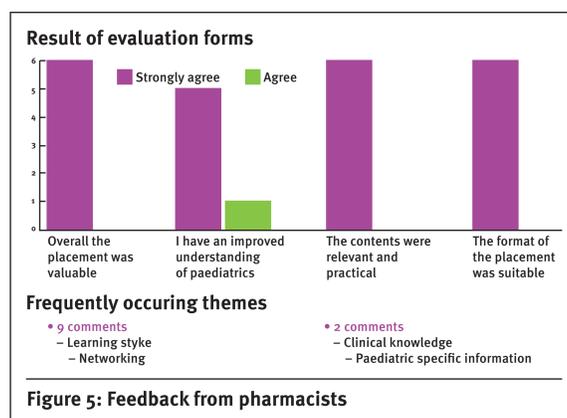


Figure 5: Feedback from pharmacists

- The undergraduate students' feedback focussed on improvement of their general clinical knowledge and gaining a better understanding of the roles of pharmacists. They preferred to learn by having hands-on experience (Figure 3).
- The intern pharmacists' feedback focussed on the paediatric clinical information they learnt, including comparison to their experience and practices at different hospitals. They preferred to learn by self-identifying their learning requirements (Figure 4).

- The registered pharmacists' feedback focussed on specific paediatric practices that they observed. The pharmacists enjoyed and preferred learning by networking with other pharmacists (Figure 5).

## Discussion

Within these two common themes 'clinical knowledge' and 'learning style', the responses varied according to the visitors' level of experience. There is a difference in preferred learning styles at different stages of professional development, and specific clinical knowledge also develops over time.

In comparison with the literature, the preferred learning styles of the pharmacists are similar. Pharmacists in this project and in other studies both lean towards **assimilator**, a learner who prefers to think and watch (Figure 6). This is supported by the feedback from the respondents which indicated that they enjoyed learning from observation, rather than doing it themselves.

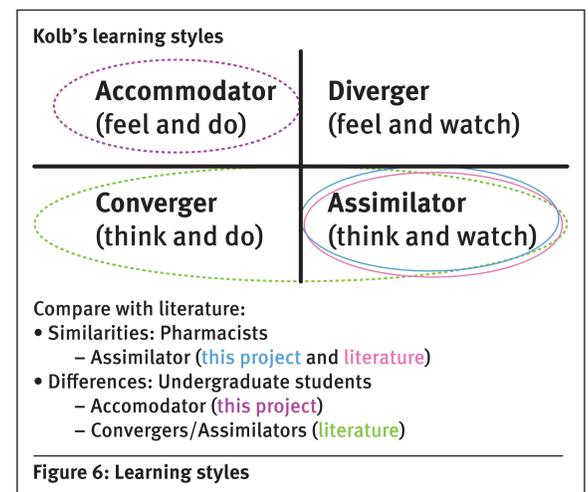


Figure 6: Learning styles

In contrast, the preferred learning styles of undergraduate students differ between this project and other studies. The undergraduate students in this project demonstrated a preferred learning style of **accommodator**, a learner who prefers to feel and do, whereas other studies indicate that the preferred learning styles of undergraduate students lean more towards **converger**, a learner who prefers to think and do, and **assimilator** (Figure 6). This difference in learning styles may be influenced by the nature of the placement, as LCCH provides a unique paediatric experience at a tertiary level. The undergraduate students may be more eager to have hands-on experience compared to a typical experiential placement as a result.

## Conclusion

The placements were perceived by visitors as valuable and relevant, and achieved the objective of providing a comprehensive overview of paediatric pharmacy practice. It is important to consider the learning styles and learning objectives for individual placement participants to optimise their placement experience and practitioner development.

## Acknowledgements

We thank all the visitors who have provided feedback on their paediatric placements, and the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital pharmacy team for providing education and training during these placements.