INTRODUCTION

Peer-assisted learning (PAL) focuses on facilitating learning. Students in the same subject learn together with their peers, facilitated by trained student facilitators in the year above. A pilot PAL scheme was introduced at Reading School of Pharmacy.

OBJECTIVE

To describe the implementation and evaluation of a peer-assisted learning (PAL) pilot scheme at a pharmacy school in the UK.

DESIGN

Pharmacy academics and the PAL co-ordinator designed and implemented the pilot scheme in pharmacy.

The PAL co-ordinator trained PAL leaders (see Figure 1).

METHOD

Evaluation included questionnaires and one-to-one interviews with PAL learners and a focus group with PAL leaders.

RESULTS

Learners

- Fun and interactive; encouraged collaborative learning
- Less formal and provided a relaxed atmosphere
- Increased confidence to ask questions (basic and complex concepts) and reduced pressure to answer correctly
- Increased understanding of subject area
- Some were less comfortable with the less structured format

Leaders

- A “milestone” in their personal development and a valuable addition to their curriculum vitae
- Additional skills and experiences gained/enhanced: leadership, teamwork, facilitation, inter-personal relations and communication
- Consolidated own learning

FUTURE WORK

Additional subject-specific support and learning from past PAL leaders.

CONCLUSION

- The successful pilot provides an evidence base for future implementation of the scheme.
- There is scope to extend the topic areas covered within PAL.
- PAL provided a different and innovative approach to teaching and learning; students and academics assume different ‘roles’ and this model showed benefits in a pilot PAL scheme in pharmacy.

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