

CASE STUDY

The Safe Use of Insulin

An online course created in rapid response to diabetes care alert

A Virtual College Case Study



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The **background**

In June 2010, the National Patient Safety Agency issued an alert in response to significant problems in the treatment and care of diabetes sufferers in hospitals.

There were nearly 3,900 recorded incidents of incorrect dosage involving insulin and this included over 30% of inpatients who had experienced an error in medication.

A series of high profile cases, including one death and one case of severe harm, had highlighted the danger of the incorrect use of insulin in treating diabetes.

NHS Diabetes attributed this to knowledge gaps in staff.

The **solution**

Virtual College worked in partnership with NHS Diabetes to create the 'Safe Use of Insulin' e-learning course.

The project involved working with a consortium of several multi-disciplinary subject matter experts to ensure that the resources delivered were accurate, up-to-date and contained all the relevant information.

The unique audience of healthcare workers, who habitually need to undertake learning around shift patterns and often in high-pressure situations, required an efficient, easily-accessible technical solution.

In just three months, the rapid response project with NHS Diabetes resulted in the production of an online course to tackle the problem of mistreatment of diabetes sufferers. The system ensured learners could self-register at any time of day without the need to refer to their organisation. This function was particularly useful for shift working nurses.

Self-registration details linked to a dedicated NHS Diabetes section of Virtual College's Learning Management System so that organisations could run management reports.

The system records all training activity, so subscribers are able to access real-time data of learners' progress to help identify improvement areas and feed these into continuing development.

The **challenge**

This triggered an immediate need for training on the safe use of insulin which would deliver the knowledge in an understandable and engaging way to enhance retention.

Timescales for the development of training resources were short, as the problem was already real and significant.

The solution would need to address the need for an effective and reliable way of delivering accurate and measurable training quickly to large numbers of healthcare professionals on a national level.

Clearly, in such a case, it was also important that the course reflected the latest academic and policy thinking and adhered to the highest standards of medical best practice.



The results

Within 18 months of launching the course over 60,000 healthcare professionals from every NHS trust in the country had registered and over 45,000 had completed the course.

By 2016, over 160,000 learners had registered and 108,000 had completed the course and registrations were still running at over 1000 per month. In a survey of learners, 87% said they would recommend the course to colleagues.

It is hard to imagine that traditional face to face learning could have achieved the rapid delivery and take up by such large numbers in a cost effective manner.

Judith Clarkson, Director Health and Social Care Division, Virtual College, commented:

“This was one of the most successful e-learning projects ever undertaken by the NHS and continues to have an important impact on the lives of many.”



What next?

Building on the success of this service and the recognition that online learning could provide a successful solution for other areas of patient safety training, Virtual College developed the comprehensive National Patient Safety Suite (NPSS), in consultation with subject matter experts.

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Now in double figures, each CPD certified course is a response to learning needs clearly identified by Virtual College's sector partners, and includes subjects such as:

- Omitted and delayed medicines in hospitals
- Basic Life Support
- Safe Management of Sepsis
- Overview of Medical Terminology

By the end of 2015, there were over 300,000 registered learners taking courses helping to make a major contribution to improving patient safety. Importantly, learning has been delivered in a way that works for the healthcare audience.



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About Virtual College

Since 2006, we have provided training to every NHS Trust and now work with over 60 local safeguarding boards. Over this period, we have donated more than £200,000 to healthcare and safeguarding charities.

We are part of Virtual College, which has over 2 million learners and is growing at a rate of 1000 per day across public and private sectors.

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