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Media Release

Innovative training at the RUH helps improve patient care

Medical students at the Royal United Hospital are using state of the art equipment to learn how to perform vital blood tests, which will lead to enhanced patient care and improved safety.

The students improve their technique and competence in taking arterial blood, a process which can be painful and unpleasant for patients, by practising on a patient simulator (manikin) – or at least part of one – a simulated arm.

Iain Smith, Medical Simulation Technician at the RUH, says: “Around 40,000 arterial blood gas (ABG) tests are performed across the hospital every year. An ABG involves drawing a small amount of blood from an artery with a thin needle and syringe. The most common area of the body is the radial artery in the wrist but sometimes an artery in the groin or other areas are used.

“Taking and testing arterial blood samples is important in the assessment of critically ill patients, it provides vital information to help us manage their treatment.

“By practising on the manikin, the students gain in skill and confidence, which will ultimately improve patient experience at the RUH.”

The undergraduates from Bristol University Medical School develop their clinical skills in the safe environment of the Simulation Centre – which is supported by Bristol University – at the Bath Academy at the RUH.

Their training involves the use of a blood gas analyser, kindly donated by Roche, which has been specially adapted to be used in a simulated environment. The students take arterial blood from the manikin arm, and then inject the ‘dummy’ sample into the blood gas analyser. It produces a printout of results which the students then interpret. The blood gas analyser mimics the real ones in other departments in the hospital, and adds to the realism of the training sessions.

Iain says: “The students tell us that these teaching sessions are realistic and helpful and we have now extended the simulated AGB training to newly qualified doctors.”

Approximately 200 medical students and 60 doctors and nurses at the RUH will use the simulated ABG teaching package every year.

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