# PEER ASSISTED LEARNING IN UNDERGRADUATE PAEDIATRICS

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## INTRODUCTION
Medical students deem paediatrics to be a difficult specialty due to its volume of content and inadequate clinical exposure, attributed to short attachments and lack of bedside teaching.

Consultant paediatricians often express barriers to teaching such as support, resources and learner/institution relationships, however students are keen to receive constructive feedback which is often an underused tool due to the time pressures of clinicians.

Peer assisted learning has been shown to be an effective method of teaching with benefits to students and tutors alike. Despite this, the effect of peer assisted learning in paediatrics is yet to be formally evaluated.

## AIM
The aim of this study was to evaluate a student-led revision course for students preparing for undergraduate examinations in paediatrics.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Population

All penultimate year medical students at one institution were invited to attend a free one-day student-led revision course in paediatrics, consisting of a lecture, small group teaching and a revision booklet (detailed below).

### Lecture

- 1 hour lecture prepared and delivered by senior medical students.
- Key revision and exam topics revised with advice on exam preparation.

### Small Group Teaching

- 4 exam-style clinical cases prepared by senior medical students and checked by a senior clinician.
- Students split into groups of 8-12 to practice cases with a senior medical student or junior doctor facilitating.

### Revision Booklet

- 24-page revision guide prepared by senior medical students.
- Key exam topics and clinical cases covered in booklet.

### Evaluation Method

Course participants were asked to complete an anonymous pre-course and post course questionnaire based on 5-point likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) and qualitative responses. The difference between pre- and post-course feedback scores was analysed using the student’s t-test. Post-course feedback was also collected from peer tutors.

## RESULTS

140 penultimate year students attended the revision course. 87 (62%) completed the course evaluation questionnaires.

### Which of the three course components was most helpful? (n=83)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-Course Mean Score (1-5)</th>
<th>Post-Course Mean Score (1-5)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel prepared for clinical paediatric exams.</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel prepared to manage children in clinical practice.</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION

100% of students felt that being taught by peers added educational benefit above the conventional teaching they received by paediatricians during their paediatrics attachment.

### PEER TUTOR COURSE EVALUATION

Peer tutors were asked to lead small group teaching on this course. They were provided with a detailed set of candidate instructions and examiner instructions for each of the 4 exam-style clinical cases. They were also given a guidance sheet on how to facilitate discussion within the groups.

30 peer tutors participated in this course, all were either final year medical students who had completed their paediatric examinations or junior doctors. 19 (63%) completed the tutor evaluation questionnaire. 18/19 (95%) peer tutors reported that this was not their first experience of teaching other students.

Peer tutors felt that teaching on this course improved their confidence more than anything else. There was a self-reported improvement in paediatrics knowledge amongst tutors but this was less than the improvement in teaching confidence.

## CONCLUSIONS

- The results of this study demonstrate the positive evaluation of a student-led undergraduate paediatrics revision course, in particular the small group sessions which included personalised feedback on performance.
- After this course students felt significantly better prepared for clinical paediatric examinations. Peer tutors who lead small group teaching on this course felt that participation improved their confidence in teaching other students.
- Peer assisted teaching is clearly of benefit in paediatrics and students feel that additional learning can be gained from being taught by peers, rather than solely through conventional methods.
- Peer assisted teaching should be encouraged in undergraduate paediatric curricula not only to bring educational benefits but to increase enthusiasm for the specialty and improve recruitment to paediatrics.