

LETTERS

Response to letter to the editor regarding 'Growing as debriefers, together: eight tips for launching and sustaining an online meta-debrief club'

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To the editor-in-chief,

We thank Harrison and colleagues for their thoughtful engagement with our work and for describing an approach that appears to support valuable faculty learning in their local context [1]. We particularly welcome this exchange as an example of the collegial scholarly discourse through which emerging educational practices and concepts can be examined, challenged and refined. Constructive disagreement does not diminish our shared commitment to improving simulation faculty development; rather, it helps to surface underlying assumptions, test conceptual boundaries and advance collective understanding. We agree with much of their argument. The pre-brief, simulated scenario and debrief are interdependent phases of a simulation-based educational activity, and decisions made during design or pre-briefing may certainly shape learner expectations, psychological safety and what subsequently becomes possible within the debrief.

We do not, therefore, suggest that a meta-debriefing conversation should ignore material outside the debrief itself. Our proposed definition concerns the primary object and purpose of reflection, rather than the boundaries of what may be discussed [2]. A meta-debrief conversation may move into the pre-brief or the simulated scenario whenever doing so helps debriefers understand why a debrief unfolded as it did, examine the educator-learner relationship, or consider alternative facilitation choices. Nor does 'debriefing practice' denote only technique or adherence to frameworks; it includes the cognitive, social, relational, contextual and pedagogical work through which a debrief is facilitated. Indeed, Kumar et al. positioned context-dependence as one of its four pillars underpinning the conceptualisation of meta-debriefing [2], and in our practice guidelines article we explicitly advocate adaptation to debriefers' learning needs and the preceding debriefing experience [3].

We hold reservations about redefining meta-debriefing as a retrospective exploration of the design and implementation of an *entire* simulation event. Such a definition potentially blurs the distinction between scenario design reviews,

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post-course faculty reflections, curricular evaluations, quality improvement exercises or after-action reviews. Each may indeed be highly worthwhile. Grouping them under one term risks obscuring what is distinctive about ‘debriefing the debrief’: supported critical reflection upon debriefing practice. On an additional semantic note, the term ‘meta’ refers to something that is ‘self-referential in reflecting or representing the characteristics it alludes to or depicts’ [4]. Here, the current definition foregrounds the ‘debriefing the debrief’ element, while holding close other elements of the simulation activity.

In practice, this distinction may sometimes matter little; good faculty development conversations should follow learning wherever it leads. In scholarship, however, conceptual boundaries influence which activities and participants are studied, how an intervention is described, which outcomes are selected, and whether findings can be compared or synthesised. Recent discussion within this journal has similarly argued that uniformity of terminology does not require uniformity of practice, while coherent language strengthens shared understanding and research comparability [5]. This is particularly pertinent while meta-debriefing remains substantially underexplored and its evidence base is still developing [2]. A common definition is therefore not semantic policing, but infrastructure for cumulative inquiry.

Harrison and colleagues’ letter usefully exposes a productive tension between scholarly conceptualisation and real-world enactment. Educational practices are porous: a conversation beginning as meta-debriefing may ‘leak’ into scenario design, pre-briefing or the wider course. Acknowledging this permeability enriches learning and should not be artificially curtailed. Equally, not every valuable reflective faculty conversation requires the same label.

We therefore regard the Dundee approach as complementary rather than contradictory: a broader faculty development practice within which meta-debriefing may sit. Our preference is to retain a debrief-focused definition while allowing the conversation itself to remain expansive.

We are grateful to Harrison and colleagues for creating the opportunity to clarify this distinction and welcome the continuation of this constructive scholarly conversation.

Sincerely,
Nathan Oliver and Prashant Kumar

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