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ESCAPING SILOS: USING AN INTERPROFESSIONAL ESCAPE ROOM TO ENHANCE HUMAN FACTORS AWARENESS AND TEAMWORK IN HEALTHCARE

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Introduction: Human factors are essential to patient safety and effective clinical practice, yet traditional teaching methods often struggle to engage multidisciplinary teams in a practical and collaborative manner. Escape rooms are increasingly recognised as a didactic tool that supports active learning, problem-solving, and the development of key skills such as teamwork and communication [1]. As part of the Skills and Simulation Team's Open Days at University Hospitals Birmingham (Heartlands, Queen Elizabeth, and Good Hope), an interprofessional escape room was developed as a novel, recreational learning activity. It aimed to bring together clinical and non-clinical staff in a high-pressure, team-based environment to reflect on human factors concepts through immersive gameplay.

Methods: Participants formed interprofessional teams to complete an escape room comprising sequential puzzles embedded with clinical and human factors challenges. Tasks included anatomy-based codebreaking, the simulated management of a never event, and deciphering visual and riddle-based clues. The scenarios targeted core non-technical skills such as communication, situational awareness, prioritisation, and escalation. Approximately 34 staff members participated, including nurses, midwives, doctors, students, technicians, and administrative staff. The escape room was grounded in constructivist principles, promoting experiential learning, collaborative problem-solving, and reflection. Participant feedback was collected via structured questionnaires to assess perceived impact and engagement. To enhance motivation and foster a sense of friendly competition, a leaderboard displaying team names and completion times was maintained outside the room.

Results: Participants (n=34) rated the escape room experience highly across all domains using a 0–10 Likert scale. The activity was found to be engaging and enjoyable (mean=9.59, SD=0.76) and promoted effective teamwork and collaboration (mean=9.65, SD=1.06). Objectives and instructions were perceived as clear (mean=8.88, SD=1.26). Participants also felt that the exercise encouraged critical thinking and problem-solving skills (mean=9.56, SD=0.83). Overall enjoyment was rated highly (mean=9.06, SD=1.59). Completion times ranged from 14 to 38 minutes. Many noted that the experience facilitated critical thinking and decision-making under pressure. The format was praised as accessible, well-organised, and suitable for a wide range of professional backgrounds and experience levels.

Discussion: The interprofessional escape room proved to be an engaging, low-cost educational tool that effectively promoted human factors awareness, teamwork, and critical thinking. Its success highlights the potential for integrating gamified, simulation-based approaches into wider healthcare education, supporting a culture of safety and collaboration across diverse staff groups.

Ethics Statement: As the submitting author, I can confirm that all relevant ethical standards of research and dissemination have been met. Additionally, I can confirm that the necessary ethical approval has been obtained, where applicable.

REFERENCES

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