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"Safe Lives, Save Lives". Interprofessional Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) awareness training for final year QUB dental and pharmacy undergraduates

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“Safe Lives, Save Lives”

Interprofessional Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) awareness training for final year QUB Dental and Pharmacy Undergraduates



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Aim

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) are a prevalent societal problem, with approximately 15.4 million incidents of DVA annually in Britain¹. In 2021, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that one in four young women, (aged 15-24 years), who have been in a relationship, will have already experienced violence by an intimate partner by the time they reach their mid-twenties². Healthcare professionals (HCPs) are in a unique position to identify DVA, and to intervene³. The Centre for Dentistry at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) has an existing programme to raise awareness of DVA with dental undergraduates. A collaboration between the School of Pharmacy and the Centre for Dentistry at QUB led to the development of an interprofessional session for the 2023-24 cohort. The interprofessional awareness session explored the nature, extent and impact of DVA in families and the services available in the community to support victims.

Participants rated the sessions as 4.04 out of 5 via the evaluation form and reflected that the experience provided them with a greater understanding of each other's expertise and clinical roles as well as an enhanced understanding of their shared responsibility in recognising DVA in their patients.

Methods

The roles of healthcare professionals (HCPs), specifically dentists and pharmacists, and the simple steps we can take to help patients with DVA were discussed. DVA awareness training has been part of the QUB dental undergraduate curriculum since 2013 and is based on the Ask, Validate, Document, Refer (AVDR) approach⁴. In October 2023, the teaching was expanded to include pharmacy students. All final year dental (n=59) and pharmacy (n=119) undergraduates were assigned to interprofessional groups of 8-10 participants. All students were allocated pre-reading, after which they met to work collaboratively on dental and pharmacy DVA cases (co-designed with Woman's Aid). All groups then attended a joint faculty teaching event, where interprofessional groups presented their cases to their peers and faculty from both schools. Participants' views on the workshop, including working with another professional group, were explored in a short questionnaire, distributed on Microsoft forms.

Results

Seventy five pharmacy (63% response rate) and thirty four dental (58% response rate) undergraduates completed the evaluation form.

One hundred students (92%) agreed that the workshop completely met its objectives. More than half of the respondents (56%; n=61) found collaborating with their interprofessional colleagues to be straightforward, but 18% (n=20) found coordinating their timetables challenging, see Figure 1 below.

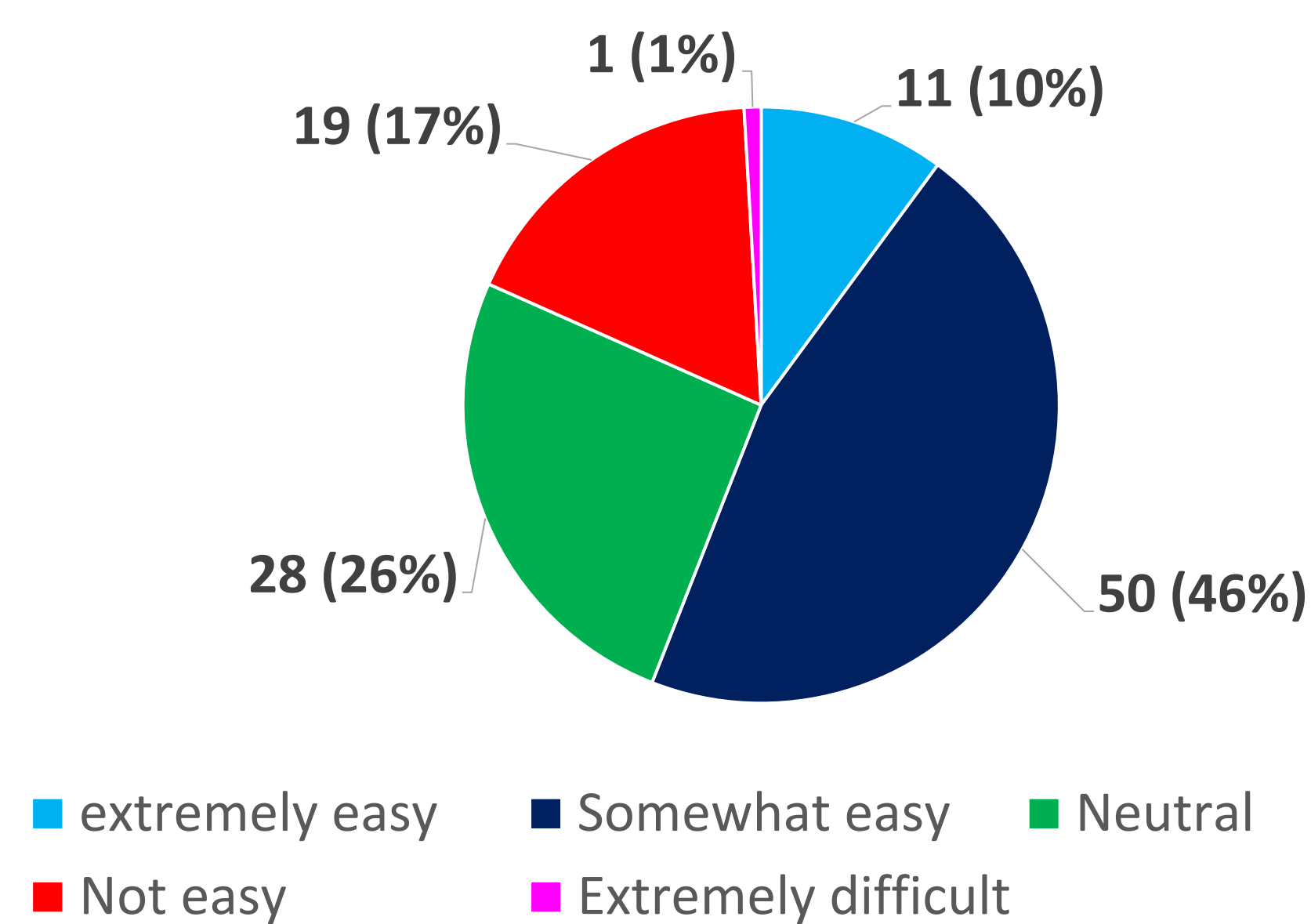


Figure 1: How easy was it to prepare for the workshop with colleagues?

Key session themes identified from respondents' free text responses to “key take-aways” included; It can happen to anyone and how to have “that” conversation. More detail and student quotes are included in Figure 2.

| Theme | Quote |
|---------------------------------|---|
| It can happen to anyone | “Not just women” (Pharmacy) “Domestic violence happens to EVERYONE” (Pharmacy) |
| How to have “that” conversation | “Can happen to anyone, even people you wouldn't expect. I learnt how to have conversations, to not push away the abused person but to encourage them to seek help” (Pharmacy) “How important it is to ask about it as sometimes it takes up to 37 times before a victim will say anything” (Dentistry) |
| You can save someone's life | “How important it is to recognise the signs and that we can make a difference” (Dentistry) “You can save someone's life” (Pharmacy) |
| What to look out for | “Domestic abuse doesn't have to be just bruises and cuts it can present as anything” (Pharmacy) “Signs of DVA can be confused with other mental health issues, and it is a difficult subject to approach with patients” (Dentistry) |
| Support for victims | “I took away how to deal when placed in the situation of treating a patient with domestic violence” (Dentistry) “Ask for Ani” (Pharmacy) |

Figure 2: What were your key take-aways about domestic violence and abuse from this session?

Respondents also provided feedback on what they had learnt about each other's roles in the management of DVA. This included their similarities and differences, professional roles as well as working together. More detail and student quotes are included in Figure 3.

| Theme | Quote |
|--------------------|--|
| Similarity | “That pharmacy and dentistry are similar in that they both have windows of opportunity to spot and act on DVA” (Dentistry) |
| Difference | “We both have different segues into recognizing and managing these situations” (Pharmacy) |
| Professional roles | “I had never put much thought into how oral damage could be an indicator of domestic abuse” (Pharmacy) “Pharmacists can have a closer patient relationship than I realised” (Dentistry) |
| Working together | “Learned the importance of teamwork and that you don't have to manage everything on your own” (Dentistry) |

Figure 3: What did you learn about your fellow healthcare professionals?

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Conclusion

There is international agreement that health professional students should be prepared for ever evolving and complicated healthcare systems by participating in Interprofessional Education (IPE)⁵. Despite some timetabling challenges reported by the students, rich learning about both the subject matter and their respective roles in management was evident.

The interprofessional workshop facilitators demonstrated the collaborative nature of joint leadership, promoting trust and acceptance of interprofessional practice⁶. The IPE activities gave the students an appreciation and respect for each other's roles in dealing with DVA, encouraged team formation and insight. In addition to raising awareness of an important societal issue, this novel session with the shared goal of improving patient care, will help prepare the students for their own future professional practice⁵.