Sharing Paramedic Learning Across the UK and Gibraltar: Wimba Live Classroom

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Background

The paramedic profession is relatively new to higher education and professional registration.[1] Compared to nursing or medical education there exists very little literature or precedent to guide curriculum design and delivery.

SGUL has delivered a paramedic science programme to prepare graduates for work across the south east of England since 2004. This is done in partnership with the London Ambulance Service and the South East Coast Ambulance Service.

Recently the Gibraltar Health Authority has commissioned students to study with SGUL. In the UK the background of students entering the programme has become increasingly diverse. Interest from overseas has grown as more countries with emerging paramedic practice look to the UK for a recognised standard of education and practice.

Using Live Classroom

Wimba is an example of a synchronous, interactive online environment that can be employed for education or business.[2] It has been employed on the SGUL programme as a host for occasional tutorials in the past but is now used to host teaching sessions that are shared between all cohorts. One of the aims of the project was to use this tool to prevent isolation of overseas students from the core programme and improve their student experience.[3]
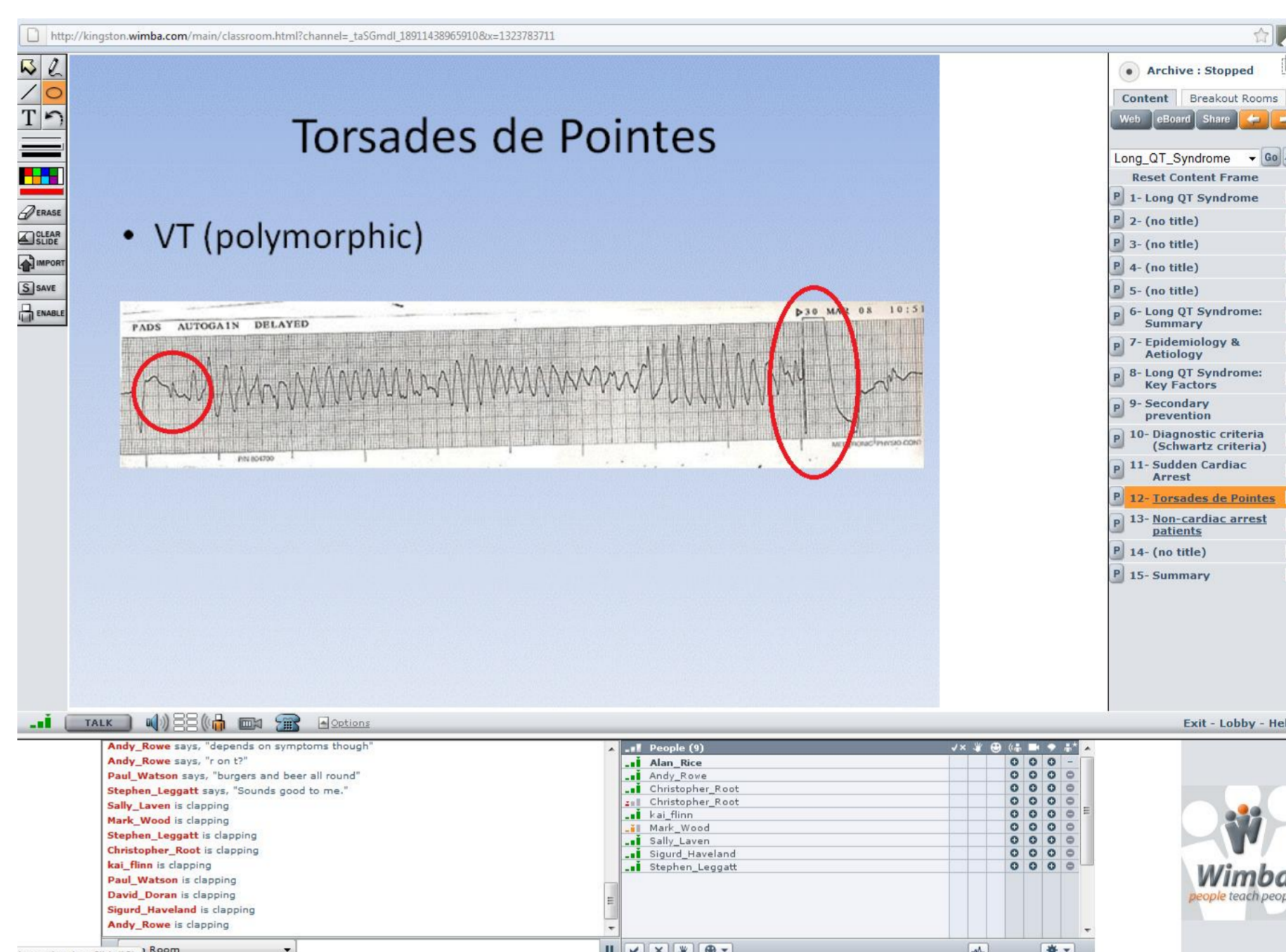
Both lecturers and students shared the responsibility to deliver sessions. Voice, text, power-point and an interactive class voting tool are all used to communicate during a session. Content is flexible and aligns with individual student interests.

Student Evaluation

An online student evaluation was employed after the pilot testing of the revised shared learning approach to using Live Classroom. Likert-rating scales and open response items were employed to evaluate the student experience (n=11).

- Students identified that they enjoyed the experience and felt that it helped to promote cross cohort relationships (92% stongly agree, 8% agree). 91% of those who took part in the pilot stated they would use it again given the chance.

- Students did not feel it was a replacement for face to face teaching (58% disagree, 17% strongly disagree).

- There were some technical issues as the students accessed the classroom from home. These were wireless strength and initial start up issues: *"The problems I experienced were due to computer faults my end, not the programme itself."*

- Students also commented on the length of the sessions, suggesting that they should be limited to two hours as maintaining concentration was difficult.

- Previous evaluation of Live Classroom when used as a tutorial tool showed overall poor perception of value by the students.

Live Classroom in use

Conclusion & Recommendations

Live Classroom offers a rich opportunity for engaging with students from a wide geographical area. From our experience the type of content delivered is of paramount importance, with student interaction helping to encourage enjoyment. Both lecturing staff and students felt that it is not a replacement for face to face teaching but instead offers a way of different student groups sharing learning where they previously would have had no opportunity to do so.

For UK based programmes it offers a supplementary pedagogical approach to complement core delivery. For overseas programmes hosted online from the UK, Wimba and other associated online classroom tools offers a flexible, interactive teaching tool that could sit at the heart of any distance learning curriculum. It also offers an opportunity for both UK and international students to share their learning experience.

References

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3. Garcia D, Uria C, Granda J, Suarez F & Gonzalez F (2007) *A Functional Evaluation of the Commercial Platforms and Tools for Synchronous Distance e-Learning*. 2 (1): 95-104

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