SIMULCAST

Journal Club Summary May 2020
"Conceptual Framework for Development of Debriefing Skills"

Expert Opinion: Michelle Brown, PhD

"Regardless of how many times you have transitioned between stages, there is always room for growth"

The Article :
"A Conceptual Framework for the Development of Debriefing Skills"

Cheng, A., Eppich, W., Kolbe, M., Meguerdichian, M., Bajaj, K. and Grant, V.
Simulation in Healthcare: The Journal of the Society for Simulation in Healthcare, 15(1), pp.55-60.

Case & Summary Author :

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Simulcast Journal Club is a monthly/ series that aims to encourage simulation educators to explore and learn from publications on Healthcare Simulation Education.

Each month we publish a case and link a paper with associated questions for discussion.

We moderate and summarise the discussion at the end of the month, including exploring the opinions of experts from the field.

The Case :

Annika watched in admiration as her mentor completed a masterful multidisciplinary debrief. Despite a pretty large crowd, William somehow managed to create a sense of intimacy that generated an enthralling and occasionally game changing conversation. She hungered for that skillset.

Clutching her PEARLS debriefing tool, she worked hard to break down why the conversation had been so effective, but while she found it helpful to structure her own debriefs with it, William seemed to dance about a through an array of different techniques in a way that made it hard to deconstruct afterward. One minute he was utilising advocacy and inquiry, the next he essentially paused the discussion while facilitating an 'expert in the room' micro-tutorial on ventilation strategies. It felt a bit like playing conversational strategy bingo, except that somehow when William did it, it all hung together comfortably.

Annika had assumed that comprehensively understanding her traditional debrief phases would give her a sense of mastery in the learning conversation, but as she watched William in action it occurred to her that maybe it wasn't being brilliant at one technique that made you an expert.

Discussion :

When we learn about debriefing we are often taught a particular structure or conversational style that is seen to be essential to the technique. In this month's journal club article, Cheng et al propose a conceptual framework for development of debriefing skills, evoking the importance of adaptive expertise : the ability of a facilitator to change strategy or adapt technique on the fly to a specific situation or educational need.

By mapping out the phases of 'discovery, growth and maturity', they outline stages of expertise within debriefing, but in doing so, they also challenge the notion that there is one way to debrief well, opening us to the opportunities available to us to extend ourselves in different directions with debriefing.

For this month we'd love to know what you think of the article, if you have any critique for the paper, and what thoughts this stimulates in your own practice regarding how you debrief, and how you cultivate growth in your colleagues.

Article Summary :

In 'The Journey of Developing Debriefing Expertise - A Conceptual Framework', Cheng et al explore professional development for debriefers. They argue that while there are many papers dedicated to debriefing frameworks, methods and conversational strategies there has been much less discussion within the simulation community about how debriefers move towards obtaining expertise over time.

The majority of the paper then presents a debriefing specific adaptation of the 'Dreyfus & Dreyfus' 5 stage model of skill development which describes 5 developmental stages of skill acquisition (novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise) and proposes that individuals draw on prior experiences to progress through each stage and reach higher levels of expertise.

The authors actually take that model and then compress it into a 3 step process, redefining the stages as Discovery, Growth and Maturity. They argue that having 3 categories instead of 5 actually allows the description of each category to be less specific, allowing educators from a variety of backgrounds to identify where they're sitting within that framework more easily.

The Discovery phase is described as the earliest phase, where debriefers "acquire the foundational knowledge of key debriefing concepts, such as learning about frameworks, conversational strategies and psychological safety.". They argue that debriefers in this phase have a large amount of intrinsic cognitive load at the start of their journey, and so they often seek rules and relatively rigid structures for debriefing to cope with those challenges.

The Growth phase is described as one where the debriefer has achieved competence and a solid understanding of the basics, and develops a broader utility belt of strategies and conversational techniques to deal with the unexpected. This phase is highlighted as the realm of 'routine experts' who can sometimes still struggle with adaptability or new ideas in the face of unexpected debriefing challenges.

Finally, the Maturity phase is described as one where the debriefer achieves unconscious confidence and high levels of theoretical understanding. Interestingly the perspectives of the authors to me come out a little bit more here when they emphasise that this final stage of maturity also really importantly includes an appreciation of impacting clinical outcomes through educational intervention, and embracing 'adaptive expertise'. Which is essentially moving beyond being a routine expert in a standard technique, and instead being able to instinctively shift between strategies to deal with unexpected issues as they arise.

The article then moves on to matching professional development opportunities to the different phases, which essentially moves from teaching those concrete frameworks and conversational techniques towards an emphasis on peer feedback and teaching others as debriefers reach maturity. In their discussion they acknowledge that progression towards maturity is not always going to be linear and that our progress will not always be predictable, but that the simple act of having a framework can help us as a community reflect on our development and strategise towards improvement.

Expert Opinion: Michelle R Brown, PhD
University of Alabama

Michelle Brown, PhD is an Assistant Professor and Program Director in the Department of Health Services Administration at University of Alabama, where she leads the Healthcare Simulation Master's degree program. She teaches simulation design, advanced debriefing, patient safety, effective communication, and teamwork. Michelle's primary research interests are in applying interprofessional simulation to promote effective teamwork and increase patient safety and exploring behavioral factors that impact provider decision-making.

"I am writing this commentary while sitting in a rocking chair… on a porch… overlooking a lake… during a pandemic. It is all a little strange. The scenery provides some peace and social distancing provides an opportunity to reflect on the article by Cheng et al in which they describe their framework for the development of debriefing skills as journey. Journey is a great word. Sometimes being on this debriefing journey feels a little like hiking without a map or without a good understanding of the lay of the land. There are numerous, high quality, opportunities for skill development and even practice through formal training ….. but what does the big picture look like? How do I progress to the next step? Wait a minute, what *is* my next step?

To help put structure around this journey, Cheng et al adapt the Dreyfus and Dreyfus model of adult skill acquisition to a new format specific to debriefing. The Dreyfus and Dreyfus model tends to feel like you have to fit into one of five well-defined boxes: novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, expertise (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980). The three-stage journey of discovery, growth, and maturity captures the brilliance and the ease of the authors and provides flexibility when characterizing our debriefing skills. As a quick example of this ease, I am picturing Adam Cheng masterfully, yet effortlessly debriefing difficult situations in sneakers and a hoodie…
Debriefing, like all skills exists on a continuum. The words themselves, discovery…growth…maturity… convey movement within each stage as we grow into our roles. This framework also provides the opportunity for us to sit somewhere in the in-between.

The learning process is non-linear, we all need different amounts of time, support, and modalities in order to learn. The framework the authors provide is posited with the goal of helping us achieve adaptive expertise in debriefing. Whoa! No pressure here, right? I think of my debriefing heroes (the authors of this article, Jenny Rudolph, Dawn Taylor Peterson) and I see a REALLY non-linear process map with lots of time and oodles of support as I work toward this goal of adaptive expertise. As Malcolm Knowles helps us understand through his descriptions of conditions for learning, adults want to be partners in the learning process (Knowles, 1980). Adults want information that will help them improve. The knowledge and skills the authors provide for each stage, serves as a guide for adult learners to review, consider, and, when ready, act upon. Oh, ok. I can see my journey a little more clearly now.

In addition to using this framework to guide our own growth, the authors provide faculty development strategies we can use to help our colleagues develop their debriefing skills. Clearly stated goals can provide

inspiration for people on a journey of growth (Boyatzis, 2006). I think this evidence-informed framework can be adapted for the needs of each of our institutions, for the goals we have for each of our colleagues in simulation. It's not a checklist (thank goodness), but rather the framework presents concepts to help us launch a co-created conversation with faculty-specific goals and a discussion of collaborative opportunities for training, mentorship, feedback, and reflection.

Regardless of the stage you are in, regardless of how many times you have transitioned between stages, there is always room for growth. I am personally thankful for those mature debriefers who pour into me and provide valuable feedback to support my development.

This article provides a conceptual structure for developing debriefing skills. Warm up your coffee or get another cup of tea, and take time to peruse the pages. Digest it and determine what it means for you and your organization.

References :

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Summary of this Month's Journal Club Discussion :

Blog Contributors :
- Belinda Lowe, Beth Thomas, Susan Eller, Christina Choung, Jessica Stokes-Parish
- Vic Brazil, Ann Mullen, Debra Nestel, Jenny Rudolph

It is truly a challenge to try and summarise probably the richest and most in-depth discussion we've had in Simulcast Journal Club history this month. Blessed by the participation of a wise and thoughtful cast of journal clubbers, the conversation was insightful, challenging and very, very clever.

In fact, it was so clever that a number of people mentioned feeling quite intimidated to comment, and to that I would say even if you didn't feel comfortable or it sounds overwhelming, please take the time to go and read the comments at some stage in your own time and just soak in some of the insights at your own pace. I myself needed to re-read and think about a number of comments for a long time before properly processing them, but in doing so I think my understanding of these concepts has really grown over the course of the month.

Anyway, in attempting to summarise the discussion, the big ticket items to me were :

- We discussed the purpose of a conceptual framework : is it the introduction or conclusion on a topic?
- We explored the concept of expertise : how to measure it & how to nurture it

The purpose of a conceptual framework : is it the introduction or conclusion on a topic?

Susan Eller argued that one's perspective on conceptual frameworks can impact one's perspective on the paper itself. She stated that one definition of a conceptual framework is *"as a justification for why a study should be conducted, and includes: a description of known knowledge, identification of gaps in understanding, and declaration of the methodological underpinnings of the research project."*. Essentially she implies here that if one views this article as 'a final say' on the topic, it can come across as flawed because it doesn't provide enough answers/solutions, whereas if it is instead viewed as a conversation starter ie. : "What do we know and how can we organise it in our heads in a way that allows further development?" the article can be seen as having a different purpose and impact.

Debriefing expertise : how to measure it & how to nurture it

While most respondents agreed on the importance of debriefing expertise and particularly this concept of adaptive expertise the article generated much discussion about how to define what that meant. A number of experienced nursing educators voiced some familiarity with the Dreyfus & Dreyfus model, which made it a helpful base concept to scaffold additional comments on. However Beth Thomas challenged the article by arguing the paper *"does not explicitly address how one transitions from 'routine' to 'adaptive' expertise…. Nor does it explain why 'adaptive expertise' can be achieved by some, but not by others.".*

She elaborated that in some ways utilising the Dreyfus & Dreyfus model implies a natural progression through the accumulation of concrete experience, and thus under-emphasises the importance of *"approaches that foster metacognitive skills in critical thinking and reflective practice."* She also highlights the 'practice development triangle' for debriefer development highlighted in **"Thinking on your feet"—a qualitative study of debriefing practice",** an article from Advances in Simulation in 2016 that *"supports a shift in focus from microskill development towards approaches that cultivate values and developing artistry."*.

Multiple responders including Christina Choung & Belinda Lowe voiced appreciation for the principles of artistry in debriefing such as 'being comfortable with the uncomfortable', and it was acknowledged that traditional debriefing assessment tools can be quite behaviourist and constricting in their approach, which makes the practice of measuring and coaching adaptive expertise very challenging!   How do we coach something we find hard to even evaluate?

Debra Nestel provided a historical grounding in these concepts by providing links and brief overviews of the origins of many of these concepts. She highlighted the origins of the practice development triangle by the 'Handal G & Lauvas P. from "The "practical theory" of teachers", & highlights the background of the concepts of 'routine and adaptive' expertise, stating they were first described in a paper about Japanese sushi chefs. She also then introduces further concepts to explore with regard to teaching artistry, specifically regarding and the concept of 'workmanship of certainty and workmanship of risk'.

Jenny Rudolph added to the conversation by sharing her perspective as a sports coach as well as a debriefing expert. She argues that identifying the 'heart of the technique' : a core skill or idea that is central to success. For debriefing, for example, she proposes the dual spirit of holding high standards and high regard for learners. When such ideas are highly conceptual, however, she argues that focusing on coaching specific, achievable skills that learners can see bring value allows for a 'dopamine squirt' of enthusiasm that can be used to engage passion for future development.

All in all it was an unmissable month for journal club, and we suggest you take the time to go back and read the comments.

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