

The 'face-to-face' gold standard myth: why contraceptive implant simulation virtual training deserves equal status

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Background/Purpose:

Sexual Health Victoria (SHV) train clinicians in contraceptive implant insertion and removal. This course comprises a theoretical component, followed by a face-to-face simulation session to gain valuable practical skills. Historically rural and regional trainees often travelled significant distance to attend courses.

We adapted the 'Contraceptive Implant (Implanon NXT) education and simulation' course to include self-paced online modules for the theory, with the simulation component delivered either face-to-face in groups of four, or virtually via video link delivered individually. For virtual simulation the equipment is posted to trainees. We then examined trainee experiences, and impacts of remote implant training, and considered the potential benefits, effectiveness and viability of online delivery of implant training.

Approach:

A retrospective, quantitative and qualitative analysis was undertaken on feedback from 164 participants, comparing experiences and impacts of face-to-face training versus virtual delivery over a 12-month period (2025). Our team of implant trainers also provided reflections on the challenges and success of each model and commented on their efficacy.

Outcomes/Impact:

Evaluation data showed that participants regarded the virtual course to be equally effective as the face-to-face course in achieving intended learning outcomes; showing virtual learning to be an acceptable and effective medium for training in contraceptive implant insertion and removal. We will share findings and discuss the benefits and challenges of both delivery methods using reflections from educators.

Innovation and Significance:

Creating and delivering a virtual contraceptive implant clinical training course, in an area that is traditionally hands-on, has provided evidence of the benefits of virtual learning. Findings have highlighted the benefits of virtual training and demonstrate exciting opportunities for increasing access and choice in clinical education opportunities for all, including rural and remote health professionals.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

SHV receive simulation equipment from Organon. SHV has received educational grants and speaker fees from Organon.