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Developing 'Atiya' a Virtual Patient to Practice Patient Counselling Skills.

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Objectives Virtual patients (VPs) are a safe and standardised method of simulating clinical environments, but few studies have explored oral health care professional's experiences of learning via a VP. This study aimed to create a VP through generative conversational Artificial Intelligence (AI) which can enhance oral health education delivery skills among dental students.

Methods The study was carried out among dental students, interns and junior residents to assess their satisfaction after interaction with a Virtual Patient (VP) named 'Atiya' for enhancing their oral health education delivery skills. A 'no-code' generative conversational AI platform, was used to construct a VP with whom the study participants can interact with. Three Public Health Dentists as subject experts formed a working group to start the conceptualization process. This VP actively engaged the participants by asking pertinent questions mirroring those of a real patient who is going to receive oral health education. The VP was then integrated with an instant messaging application frequently used by the trainees giving them the possibility of interacting with it at any time.

Results Participants were enthusiastic about virtual patients as a novel training tool which provided an opportunity for learners to practice realistic scenarios in a safe environment. Participants reported liking the concept and delivery of the VP. They also reported finding it usable, and simulated VP assisted oral health education to be effective as compared to traditional methods. Amendments that were suggested included changing some of the contents.

Conclusions The VP offered an educational use as experiential learning. It appeared to be functional and usable and the dental students reported positively about the use of VP's for enhancing and increasing overall preparedness of their oral health counselling sessions. They reported that the VP had value as an adjunct to other education and training resources.