

Using games to reduce drug errors

June 7 2016, by George Wigmore



An educational board game designed to help frontline healthcare professionals to understand, recognise and minimise medication errors has been developed by Focus Games Ltd in partnership with academics from the School of Health Sciences at City University London and Health Education England.

The Drug Round Game helps to improve players' understanding of what [medication errors](#) are, the impact they have and why they happen. At City, Janet Hunter and Karen Rawlings-Anderson helped develop the game which is specifically designed for nurses and other [health care professionals](#) who are directly and indirectly involved in the administration of medications to patients and service users. The game also helps to develop the knowledge and confidence that students and staff need to reduce the incidence of medication errors.

The Drug Round Game is an adaptation of 'snakes and ladders' and it gives players the opportunity to exchange ideas, participate in interactive discussions relating to [medication safety](#) and to practice drug calculations in a safe and relaxed environment. In particular, the game has a narrative structure that is designed to help players develop a 'big picture' by covering specific issues such as the nature of errors and where and how they occur, and also potential impact on patient safety.

The game is very easy to set-up and manage and is designed for between 4 and 12 players divided into two competing teams. Games usually last for between 45 and 60 minutes but can be made shorter or longer depending on individual circumstances.

Patient safety and medicines management are areas of concern for all healthcare providers, and patients. Most medicines incidents and overdoses are avoidable with appropriate education and training. The majority of avoidable errors happen when drugs are being administered and it is likely that more effective staff training can reduce errors by improving knowledge, confidence and numeracy.

In particular, third year nursing students at City have praised the game as "fun and engaging", with several highlighting how it has not only improved nursing knowledge but that it also "makes you think about what you have learned and seen in practice".

Professor Stan Newman, Dean School of the School of Health Sciences at City University London, said: "Knowledge about drugs and when and how to use them is critical for patient well-being and safety. What better way for healthcare students to learn than by playing a game. City University has always been a leader at innovative ways of educating students and the Drug Round [board game](#) epitomizes this. Developed by staff in the School of Health Sciences the Drug Round Game achieves the learning required in an enjoyable yet challenging way for students

who end up with the knowledge they need to ensure patient safety."

Tia Khan, from The Research & Enterprise Department at City, said: "In collaboration with Focus Games Ltd, The City Enterprise Office were pleased to help support and fund novel board games developed by our staff members.

"This game is a tribute to our fantastic senior lecturer team, Janet Hunter and Karen Rawlings- Anderson. Karen and Janet, were the driving force behind this innovative teaching game. Their vision was to provide a simple but effective means of supporting front line Medical staff with drug calculation and [patient safety](#) practice in a fun and safe environment. The board game helps to practice and refresh skills."

Diane Last, Clinical Practice and Education Coordinator, West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, said: "I have played the Drug Round Game with nursing staff and they became really competitive and it generated very useful discussions. I loved the look of the [game](#) and the ease of playing."

Provided by City University London

Citation: Using games to reduce drug errors (2016, June 7) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-06-games-drug-errors.html>

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