Diggers Trail Wilderness Exercise (DTWE): A work-integrated experience for paramedic students

HELEN WEBB
SANDY ALLEN-CRAIG
ROSEMARY FORD
PAULA WILLIAMS
VAL GOODWIN

Australian Catholic University, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia

The aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a simulated wilderness exercise in the development of navigation, wilderness response and trauma care skills in senior paramedic students. Lack of skill and experience in these fields has been identified by Ambulance Victoria as a limitation of Bachelor of Paramedicine courses. The DTWE, conducted in a wilderness landscape in Central Victoria, Australia, was developed to address this identified gap.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used, namely, focus group, field diary and self-report survey, to give voice to students’ perception of their learning facilitated by the field exercise ($n = 60$).

Results identified three main themes; new understandings of self and others within the team, of professional identity and of own strength and capacity. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that DTWE provided students with more opportunity to apply knowledge and skills when compared with clinical placement with an emergency ambulance service ($p < 0.01$). Participants considered DTWE to be an effective alternative to clinical placement with an emergency ambulance service ($p < 0.01$). The DTWE offered opportunities to experience a wilderness response simulation rarely available during traditional clinical placement.

Keywords: Simulation, paramedic, clinical placement, wilderness response, ambulance, navigation