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The Post Graduate Virtual Learning Environment: an effective platform for the delivery of a surgical teaching programme in the West Midlands

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Aim: The Postgraduate Virtual Learning Environment (PGVLE) is a digital platform developed by HEEWM in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver a virtual teaching programme to surgical trainees. The programme is delivered through the BigBlueButton; an integrated virtual classroom. All teaching sessions are recorded and archived to allow trainees to review content at their convenience. We performed a contemporaneous study to review the effectiveness and quality of the platform in delivering teaching and suggest its future role in the surgical curriculum.

Method: Anonymised feedback was gathered of trainee's perspective of the platform experience, the quality of teaching and the archived content. All trainees were General Surgery higher trainees (HST) (ST3-ST8). The data from sequential teaching days was analysed.

Results: Of 90 HST, on average 40 attended each monthly training day (consistent with pre-COVID attendance). 122 trainee responses were completed. 68% of respondents were between ST3-ST5. 91% rated the administration and delivery of the teaching sessions as excellent or very good. 16% of trainees watched the archived sessions after the teaching day of which 46% felt it met their educational expectations.

Conclusions: The PGVLE is an effective platform for the delivery of a virtual surgical teaching programme. It met with high levels of trainee satisfaction in the context of the pandemic. The archived content provides advantages to consolidation of learning. It is thought that the PGVLE platform will become a key feature of the surgical training programme in a hybrid learning model, related to relevant curricula, in the future.