

# Feasibility of Student-led Entrustable Professional Activities in Hospitals during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A qualitative evaluation.

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## Aim

To evaluate the feasibility of the MedRec program during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of pharmacy students and their pharmacist preceptors.

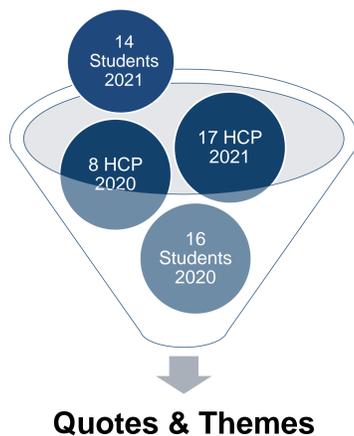
## Background

Entrustable professional activities (EPA's) are activities which are entrusted to students to conduct with minimal supervision by preceptor clinicians after demonstrating an acceptable level of competency.<sup>1</sup> Taking a medication history is an EPA students can perform as part of the Medication Reconciliation (MedRec) process.

Since 2018, an annual student-led MedRec program was initiated across various metropolitan hospitals. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 impacted pharmacy workflows forcing changes to the program as shown in **Table 1**.

## Method

From 2020 to 2021, focus groups/interviews were held with students (n=30) and pharmacist preceptors (n=25) independently and the data gathered were analysed for emergent themes.



**Table 1:** Implementation of MedRec program from 2018 to 2022 highlighting the impact of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Hospitals	4	5	2	5	13
Students	93 (48 pairs)	70 (35 pairs)	16 (8 pairs)	22 (11 pairs)	96 (48 pairs)
Total histories	~950	~1400	~200	~250	~1500
Daily histories	~6 per day	~8 per day	~4 per day	~3 per day	~4 per day
Duration	6 weeks	10 weeks	7 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks

## Results

### Workflow Changes

"actually, we had three preceptors ... they all have different approaches. So it's ... sometimes really hard to know what they want in the first go....  
**So, we just kind of like adapt to what they want."**

### Communication Issues

"...one patient particularly who was hard of hearing, so having a mask on and they were relying on lip reading, they were struggling...  
So, I just resorted to taking my mask off and standing at a safe distance ... **Just so he can see what I'm saying...that helped him a lot...**"

### Resilience

"... So, we both just kind of spoke a bit louder and just got there in the end. So, it was kind of a bit of luck. And we **both repeated it a lot** but we got there in the end."

## Discussion & Conclusion

- Despite the pandemic, pharmacy students were **able** to provide a clinical service to hospital inpatients, **adaptive to challenges** to assist their preceptor pharmacists.
- Students were minimally burdened by the pandemic. However, pharmacists were more perceptive noticing difference in students' abilities compared to cohorts from previous years.
- The program and its results may not be reproduced in other countries where COVID-19 pandemic is less controlled compared to Australia. Other workarounds may be explored such as working remotely via phone or online video calls.

### Workflow Concerns

"This year, it has probably been significantly worse...it has been **extremely tiring being pulled to do vaccines...weekend shifts, taking on ICU's, it's been a lot.**"

### Impact of Pandemic on Student Ability

"...but I also find the **difference in ability to use the eMR system**. I found that this year's one, really didn't know how to use the system...**I don't know whether the training has changed but in previous years**, since you already know roughly or catch on things more quickly, how to document, how they were to document."



### Pharmacist Preceptors

Preceptor pharmacist resolves discrepancies identified.



### Students

Gather and document a **Best Possible Medication History (BPMH)**.

**Reconcile** BPMH vs. medications charted on admission.

Drawbacks

Disruptions to students learning and communication skill development  
**Less practical**  
**Compromised efficiency.**

Pharmacy students were able to provide a clinical service to hospital inpatients  
~200 patients were seen per year

Positives