

# The Lion, the Witch and the Ward Round:

Teaching Leadership & Emotional Intelligence through Nature & Pop Culture



#### **Dr Samuel Donnelly**

Clinical Teaching Fellow<sup>1,2</sup> & Honorary Clinical Teaching Fellow<sup>3</sup>

Healthcare Improvement Team, Ninewells Hospital, NHS Tayside
Directorate of Medical Education, Ninewells Hospital, NHS Tayside
School of Medicine, University of Dundee

#### Ms Morag MacRae

Patient Safety Development Manager<sup>1</sup>& Honorary Clinical Lecturer<sup>3</sup>

#### Background

Leadership is an essential competency for doctors, influencing clinical decision-making, teamwork, and patient outcomes.<sup>1,2</sup> It also plays a role in facilitating medical staff's ability to handle patient safety issues effectively.<sup>3</sup> However, traditional medical education often focuses on academic and technical skills, with leadership development occurring informally through the "hidden curriculum."

Studies show that medical students recognise the importance of leadership and emotional intelligence (EI) in their professional growth, yet structured teaching in these areas remains limited.<sup>2,4</sup> To address this gap, we have designed a two-session leadership teaching program embedded within the University of Dundee Healthcare Improvement curriculum.



**Word Cloud 1**: visualises students' self-reported feelings immediately after the teaching sessions, capturing the emotional impact of the learning experience.

95% of students felt more confident applying the principles of emotional intelligence to their professional life after attending this teaching



of students felt more confident applying the

## Aim

To evaluate anonymous student feedback on a structured leadership teaching programme embedded within the University of Dundee's Healthcare Improvement curriculum. The programme consists of two sessions: one focused on emotional intelligence, and the other on key leadership qualities. Insights gained will be used to inform and enhance future educational practice.



Results

**Word Cloud 2**: highlights the topics and subject matter students most enjoyed discussing during the sessions, offering insight into what resonated with learners.

## **Student Feedback**

"It was a nice change from just death by PowerPoint."

"Answering all the questions, I unconsciously reflected and discovered some answers I thought I didn't know." "Engaging. Nice to have a session which encourages thought-provoking discussion."

"A fun way to incorporate leadership teaching."

*"I enjoyed the conversational* 

"Getting to learn about

## **Emotional Intelligence in Nature**

Students begin with a brief tutorial introducing Goleman's key concepts of emotional intelligence (EI)<sup>5.</sup> Following this, they pair up and are invited to take a reflective walk through the University Botanic Gardens. During the walk, each pair explores a curated set of thought-provoking questions (e.g. *"Who do you look up to, and why?"*) designed to encourage meaningful conversation and emotional connection. Later, the group reconvenes for a structured debrief. This closing session allows students to share insights, reflect on their emotional responses, and discuss how the exercise may influence their interpersonal communication and self-awareness in clinical practice.

#### Leadership through Pop Culture

"Loved the idea of having a walk around the garden, the setting definitely meant we were more honest with each other and led to a more meaningful experience." what emotional intelligence is. How it is not just about others but also about ourselves. A nice fresh breath of air."

style of teaching and felt comfortable contributing."

## Conclusions

Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants highlighting increased selfawareness, confidence in leadership roles, and appreciation for non-traditional learning methods. Many reported that the nature-based session allowed for deeper reflection, while the pop culture discussion provided engaging, relatable insights into leadership dynamics. The EI session was particularly well received because it facilitated a psychologically safe place to discuss personal issues, promoting a workplace culture that allows space for honest discussions surrounding important topics (e.g. patient safety). By embedding leadership and El into the formal curriculum, we equip future doctors with essential skills that extend beyond clinical knowledge. This innovative approach demonstrates that leadership can be effectively taught through creative and engaging learning; offering a model for future curriculum development in medical education.

This session consists of an interactive tutorial that enables students to analyse leadership qualities by presenting their favourite characters from popular culture (e.g., Mufasa, Black Panther, Hermione Granger). This shared appreciation for well-known heroes creates an engaging platform for discussing a range of leadership styles. Students then reflect on the relevance of these qualities to clinical practice and evaluate whether similar leadership traits are observed in senior clinicians during their placements.

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