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Implementing CPR training in schools

Introduction

Teaching CPR in schools is proven to increase bystander CPR rates in adulthood. In 2020, therefore, medical students founded First Aid For All Hannover (FAFA) to deliver structured CPR training to pupils. This analysis evaluates the feasibility, quality, and acceptance of FAFA's CPR training in schools.

Methods

FAFA Hannover developed a 1.5-hour curriculum for Year 7 pupils, based on European Resuscitation Council (ERC) guidelines, including hands-on CPR practice, theoretical instruction, and automated external defibrillator (AED) training. CPR instruction is delivered by medical students, who undergo regular circuit training sessions. A descriptive, questionnaire-based evaluation was conducted from two perspectives: instructor observations and pupil self-assessment measuring confidence in emergency situations, retention of CPR steps, and acceptance of the training. Data were collected from 54 instructors and 244 pupils.

Results

The instructors reported high levels of pupil engagement, with 35 instructors rating students as quite interested and five as extremely interested. Learning success was similarly rated positively with 29 instructors reporting quite high and 15 reporting extremely high outcomes. Furthermore, 29 instructors confirmed the particular benefit of student-led training for this target group. Among the pupils surveyed, 56% reported feeling substantially more confident in emergency situations following the training. A total of 114 participants indicated good retention of the key CPR steps, 78 reported feeling confident about performing chest compressions. Notably, 92 students had conversations about first aid with friends or family, acting as multipliers. Most strikingly, 82% would strongly recommend CPR training for all schoolchildren in Germany.

Conclusion

FAFA Hannover demonstrates that voluntary medical students can successfully deliver high-quality CPR training in schools. Both instructors and pupils reported strong engagement, improved retention of CPR steps, and increased confidence in chest compressions and emergency response. The initiative has influenced health policy, resulting in mandatory CPR training in Year 7 across Lower Saxony. It represents a scalable model for improving bystander CPR rates to save lives.