

Focus Groups

The VAST Board of Directors suggested that the VAST Team meet with facilitators globally to explore ideas for VAST delivery both during and post-pandemic.

The Canadian network met on January 7, 2021. It was discovered that interest in VAST is high and that facilitator refresher courses will be needed. Discussion included: increasing inter-professionalism; focusing on rural Canada for future delivery; development of virtual training modules (scenario design); and possible partnerships with similar courses.

The African network met on January 11, 2021, and like the Canadian cohort, interest remains high and it was agreed that facilitator refresher courses will be required. One attendee was able to successfully run the VAST COVID scenario to hundreds of participants and has been able to run simulation scenarios virtually with an American university partner. Other attendees were able to run the VAST Foundation Year with residents pre-COVID and plan to continue once it is safe to do so. All attendees agreed that online teaching and mentorship would be very valuable.



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Message from the VAST Team

By: VAST Team

It is with some relief and much optimism that we say goodbye to 2020 and welcome 2021 with open arms.

The advent of vaccines has given us great hopes for future VAST Course scheduling. In 2020 we had plans to host courses in Halifax, Canada; Darwin, Australia; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Fiji; India; Kigali; Dar Es Salam, Tanzania; and Myanmar. Unfortunately, like many other conferences and events, we had to cancel these courses. Later in 2020 we were lucky enough to be able to conduct a Facilitator Course in Perth, Australia and a VAST Course in Halifax, Canada, but it was certainly not the year that we planned.

We did not rest during this unplanned break, however. We were able to review scenarios and consider possible redesigns and additions to enhance both interprofessional learning and participation. We were also able to apply for various grants, conduct research, improve curricula and successfully become a registered charity.

With 2021, we are hopeful that we will once again be able to travel, host courses and meet up with old and new friends.

Hoping to see you later this year!



VAST in Perth, Australia

By: Dr. Adam Mossenson

Perth is the capital city of the Australian state of Western Australia, and is the fourth most populous city in the country. On October 19 and 20, 2020, a two-day VAST Facilitator Course was offered in Perth for the first time to seven participants from a range of disciplines (anaesthesia, nursing – ED/ICU/Periop, midwifery). The four Course Facilitators were supported by the simulation co-ordinator at Curtin.

The Course was conducted at Curtin University Midland Campus and simulation spaces were setup in two adjacent control rooms on level 2 of the building. Rather than utilising the full capacity of the Curtin Simulation Facility, using the control rooms as the simulation space was a proof of concept that immersive, high emotional fidelity simulation can be successfully delivered outside of the confines of a purpose-built simulation setting. This example hopefully provides participants with confidence that with careful consideration, they can deliver effective simulation in their workspace.



The Facilitator Course was a resounding success. Participants left the course with a commitment to immediately apply their newfound skills in their current roles. In the week following the course, several participants have already put their skills into practice, running simulation-based teaching in theatre and incorporating debriefing style questions into education sessions in the maternity ward.



The intention is to follow on from this Course with another VAST Facilitator Course in early 2021. A VAST Design workshop will be offered to these course participants, introducing the key concepts of development of new simulation scenarios. There will be opportunity to incorporate participants from this most recent course as faculty to help deliver subsequent courses.

Due to the short lead time in organising the course, the decision was made to not charge a fee for course participation. In future, VAST Courses will have a registration fee, with the proceeds going directly to support VAST's activities in low resource environments.



VAST in Halifax, Canada

By: Drs. Emma Kehoe and Patty Livingston

Halifax is the capital city of the province of Nova Scotia and is a major economic hub in Atlantic Canada. On November 7 and 8, 2020, Halifax hosted the first VAST Course to be offered in a non-rural Canadian setting. Initially, the plan was for a VAST Instructor Course including participants from across the globe, but due to COVID19 travel restrictions, it was changed to a VAST Course for local health care providers. Nine participants from a variety of disciplines (three nurses, three anesthesia residents, a surgery resident, an anesthesiologist and a surgeon) were trained by four facilitators and two simulation coordinators.

The VAST course was held in three rooms in the Bethune Building of the Victoria General Hospital. The main conference room in the basement was used for the introduction, the PowerPoint discussions and the end-of-day reflections. The two simulation rooms, located down the hall, were where the scenarios and debriefs took place. The participants and facilitators were split into two groups, which remained the same for the entire weekend due to pandemic restrictions.

Overall, the VAST Course was very well-received by the Halifax group. Participants appreciated the interdisciplinary approach and working closely with colleagues in a high-stress, low-stake setting. They looked forward to applying their non-technical skills in the workplace. The debriefing sessions were noted to be extremely helpful in providing constructive feedback.



Following completion of the course, plans were made to have a session in January 2021 to work on scenario design for new VAST scenarios to target different interprofessional disciplines.

Several participants in the VAST Course expressed interest in becoming part of the VAST team as future VAST instructors and facilitators. Many would like to facilitate VAST in underserved areas of Canada and also globally.

VAST Foundation Year

By: Dr. Tom Druitt

VAST Foundation Year is a 48-week curriculum of active learning sessions for early anaesthesia trainees and novice simulation facilitators. This resource complements the knowledge, skills and outlook of the three-day VAST Course to guide new facilitators as they introduce simulation-based education to their own academic programs. If there is established anaesthesia training occurring in a region and if there are graduates of the VAST Facilitator Course, there is value in implementing VAST Foundation Year (VAST FY).

The content of VAST FY has a practical focus, covering common and serious clinical challenges that an anaesthesia trainee may be expected to manage in their early years. Learning objectives are clearly identified for each session. Whereas the three-day VAST Course focuses primarily on the development of non-technical skills such as decision making, teamwork and task management, VAST FY has more time to build knowledge and improve technical skills, such as spinal anaesthesia and arterial cannulation. Content is drawn from peer-reviewed sources and international consensus guidelines. VAST FY is designed to complement an existing anaesthesia curriculum and moves trainees to translate their knowledge into action.

The learning methods used in VAST FY are engaging and powerful experiences. Interactive discussions explore perspectives and reinforce knowledge. Technical sessions emphasise hands-on equipment familiarity and micro-skill task breakdown. Simulations closely align with functional tasks to promote cognitive engagement to enhance the transfer of learning. Like the VAST Course, educational methods of VAST FY are designed to be active, participatory and universally engaging.

VAST FY can be run by a small group of two to four educators with the introductory experience of the VAST Facilitator Course. Weekly preparation is within two

hours for both the facilitator and participants. The teaching guide describes how to prepare, set up and run a session to meet clear learning objectives. Learner group size is ideally less than ten. Larger cohorts of trainees have been successfully split to participate on different weekdays – repeating the course allows a more effective (smaller) group size, whilst maintaining a continuous clinical workforce. Only basic equipment is needed - much can be sourced from the local clinical environment; comprehensive equipment is available at VAST Course (3 day) training sites. VAST FY is a ready-made resource for novice facilitators to bring simulation-based education to their own anaesthesia trainees.

VAST FY has been trialled in Rwanda and Ethiopia. With expansion of VAST Facilitator training, ongoing demand is expected. The course resources and documents are open access and facilitators are encouraged to use them flexibly, adapting local courses to their own circumstances. To find out more about VAST FY, make suggestions or report your own experiences of implementation, please contact us at vastcourse@gmail.com.



Upcoming Events

At this moment, all global efforts must be on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. All VAST Courses are cancelled until this crisis has passed. Rest assured that we will actively resume VAST training programs as soon as it is safe to do so.

