**Introduction**

Staff are the most valuable asset in the workplace and their training and development is crucial to the overall success of an organisation. From time immemorial, paper-based training has been the sole means used for staff development in Pathology. A network audit training at South West London Pathology (SWLP) established that paper-based training and competency assessment no longer aligns with the network’s key organisational goal, ‘to ensure and maintain a continuous competent workforce.’ There are also significant issues with paper-based training, including cost, time, storage, difficulties in monitoring and maintenance, and impact on carbon footprints. The introduction of an e-Learning management system (e-LMS) has revolutionised learning and development at SWLP. Digitalisation of training and competencies has eliminated all the limitations associated with paper-based learning and has brought about a renewed motivation among staff and an invigorated culture at SWLP. At SWLP, the e-LMS incorporates both online and laboratory-based learning and contains outstanding functionality such as interactive e-learning in varied teaching formats, automated assessment marking, lapping competence notifications, competency status visibility in real-time, customisable validity reports for the status of an individual, pathology discipline, analytical platform or network as a whole, a feature which is valuable for UKAS examinations. Staff have 24/7 access to their training and competencies on the cloud-based system, from any electronic device.

**Methods**

The network-wide training audit provided detailed on compliance of individuals, specialty and competency. Investment was made on a digital platform. Programmes were built to include e-learning with soft questions to check for engagement/learning, evidence of SOP reading, trainer demonstrations, trainee observations with the ability to upload evidence and assessments. Programmes were built for procedures as well as knowledge. Staff compliance was then assessed to see if it had increased from the original audit. After a year, a survey was carried out to evaluate the benefits and changes comparing paper-based and digital training and competence. The users sampled included learners and tutors and questions were designed to cover all features of the e-learning platform. For this study, we chose two poorly performed competencies, temperature monitoring - Kelsius and Cobas P612- P471, and compared the compliance rates between the two paper-based and digital training.

**Results**

In our study, we compared the old (Paper-based) method of training with the new (digitised) training method using staff competency compliance in two analytical processes, namely P612 and Kelsius temperature monitoring. The competency achievement rate attained for both P612 and Kelsius using paper-based training was 10%. Alternatively, digital training achieved a competency score for P612 of 71% and 86% for the Kelsius temperature monitoring competency. The staff survey revealed that for trainees, on average, it took 27% less time to complete the programs than on paper and trainers utilised 36% less time to assess trainees on the digital format. The positivity scores indicating agreement for all the themes (such as e-learning, Information retention, Mode of marking, Validity status, competency monitoring and management) evaluated in the learner survey ranged from 29 to 44 while disagreement scores ranged from 2 to 9. This was also the case for the Tutor response in the survey.

**Discussion**

Most responders were satisfied with the platform praising its ease of use, the remote and 24/7 availability of e-learning and data and the automated compliance and tracking as well as the notification system and validity outlook.

In summary

- Digitalising training and competency has shown to save time for both trainers and trainees, as evidenced using a roll template.
- Survey outcomes show that digital platform also provide ease of access, navigation and monitoring of competencies in real time for both Trainers and Trainees.
- Digital platforms facilitate uploading of evidence. This eliminates the time spent on looking through the folders collecting evidence when assessing practical competency. It also provides safe storage eliminating duplication.
- Automatic marking of assessment has demonstrated to reduce the administrative burden on tutors, and it allows trainees to receive instant feedback and results.
- Colour-coded visibility, which can be broken down into groups and presented with graphs, allow for a quick overview of individual’s departments or programme’s competency status.
- Enhanced compliance of (percentage) can be clearly observed when using digital platform compared to paper form, this is evidenced by the audit performed.

Overall, the comparison study shows the new platform has been a success. It’s improved efficiency and effectiveness and been well-received by trainees and trainers. It has proven to be streamline and enhance staff competency while minimising lapse gaps and saving time for both trainees and trainers. Additionally, it contributes to environmental conservation through reduced paper usage.

**References**

1. SWLP 2022 Vertical Training Audit
2. SWLP Digital Training Platform