Implementing CPR teaching in secondary schools - a qualitative study of school leaders' and teachers' perspectives

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We used qualitative methods to explore school leaders’ and teachers’ perspectives on CPR teaching. The study included eight Danish secondary schools, and consisted of eight semi-structured individual interviews with school leaders along with four focus group interviews with 15 teachers. Thematic analysis was used to identify regular patterns of meaning both within and across the interviews.

The purpose of the study was to explore important conditions for implementation of CPR teaching in secondary schools. In Denmark, CPR teaching has been compulsory since 2005, but less than half the Danish schools had included this in their curriculum in 2012. The reasons for this are not clear.

**CONCLUSION**

In order to facilitate implementation of CPR teaching in schools, it is necessary to understand school leaders’ and teachers’ beliefs and experiences with CPR and CPR teaching, as well as the institutional and organizational barriers to implementation.

**RESULTS**

CPR teaching was taught in four out of the eight schools, but in varying degrees. We found that school leaders’ and teachers’ perspectives on CPR teaching are connected to four interrelated conditions:

1) **Knowledge and interpretation of the legislation.** Not all participants knew about the legislation on CPR teaching. Those who did perceived it in different ways, ranging from optional to mandatory.

2) **Laypersons and CPR.** There was a clear moral imperative to act. It was perceived as a natural and civic duty for laypersons to act in case they witnessed a cardiac arrest. What it meant to act was highly influenced by expectations of skill requirements, as well as their experience with CPR. Some believed CPR skills could not be expected of laypersons; one should call for professional help. Beliefs about potential danger when using an AED were also present. Their beliefs influenced their attitude towards CPR teaching.

3) **Students’ and parents’ reactions.** Those with experience in CPR teaching only reported positive reactions from students and parents. Others anticipated it could potentially frighten students, and that few parents would disapprove of the school spending time on it.

4) **Organization of the teaching,** such as assigning responsibility, skill requirements, and teaching materials. The responsibility for teaching was diffuse, manikins were considered a necessary element in teaching material, and a CPR course a prerequisite for educating students in CPR.

**METHODS**

We used qualitative methods to explore school leaders’ and teachers’ perspectives on CPR teaching. The study included eight Danish secondary schools, and consisted of eight semi-structured individual interviews with school leaders along with four focus group interviews with 15 teachers. Thematic analysis was used to identify regular patterns of meaning both within and across the interviews.

“I know it’s a bad comparison, but in your medical terms it may serve as a good illustration. You can also read about surgery, but it would be nice to have tried to use a scalpel. This is how I would feel. I’d feel it much the same way”. Teacher

“Although CPR teaching is compulsory according to the law, I don’t think, it is perceived as compulsory”. Teacher

“You cannot make mistakes. The man is dead. You cannot kill him.” Teacher

Photographer: Christian Als

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CPR: Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
AED: Automatic external defibrillators

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