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POSTER PRESENTATION 38:

Competent or Confident? Neonatal Airway Skills Uncovered

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Introduction:

Airway management is a high-risk, time-critical skill in neonatal care. The British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM) Neonatal Airway Safety Standard provides a national framework to define and assess competency levels. However, the extent to which clinicians' self-perceived competence aligns with self-assessed skills remains unclear.

Aim:

This project aimed to quantify discrepancies between perceived and self-assessed airway competencies across the neonatal workforce, to guide training and enhance patient safety.

Methodology:

A structured survey referencing BAPM-defined competency levels (Basic, Standard, Intermediate, Advanced, Specialist), was distributed to neonatal nurses and Tier 1–3 doctors. Respondents reported their highest self-perceived competency level and completed a skill-based self-assessment mapped to BAPM criteria. Overestimation was defined as selecting a competency level while responding "No" to one or more required skills at that level. Data was analysed by staff group and self-assessed level.

Results:

Forty-four responses were analysed (10 nurses, 10 Tier 1, 12 Tier 2, 12 Tier 3 doctors). Most nurses rated themselves at Standard; Tier 1 and 2 doctors ranged from Basic to Specialist; and Tier 3 doctors reported Intermediate or higher. Despite this confidence, overestimation was widespread: 50% of nurses, 80% of Tier 1 doctors, 58% of Tier 2 doctors, and 67% of Tier 3 doctors overestimated their competency. Overall, 64% of respondents demonstrated overestimation, with the most common skill gaps identified in intubation, airway adjunct use, and troubleshooting.

Conclusion:

A substantial disconnect exists between self-perceived and self-assessed neonatal airway competency. While confidence increases with seniority, overestimation remains prevalent, even among experienced clinicians. This poses potential risks to patient safety. These findings underscore the urgent need for regular, objective skills assessments and targeted training to align confidence with competence and to support compliance with BAPM standards.