Introduction: An institution-specific needs assessment is an important part of the successful development and implementation process of an effective curriculum (1). A needs assessment gathers information on the educational needs of learners, available resources, motivation to learn and potential obstacles. These inform the curriculum development and assist with its implementation. This paper outlines the findings of a needs assessment for the development of a pediatric anesthesia skills enhancement program for anesthesia specialists (fellows) in a Middle Eastern country using a systematic methodology.

Methods: Institutional approval was obtained. Content areas covering knowledge, skills and patient management were developed based on a systematic literature review, an anonymous survey with topic rankings and informal interviews. Questionnaires listing the content areas were sent to the anesthesia specialists. The respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1-10, their current level of expertise and ideal level of expertise against each content area. A needs score (the difference between ideal and current level of expertise) was calculated for each content area with a possible maximum needs score of 9 (2).

Results: A total of 17/17 (100%) anesthesia specialists approached to date have completed the survey. Eight (47%) of the respondents have been in practice for 11-20 years. Survey responses show that technical skills such as ‘ultrasound guided regional anesthesia’ and ‘single lung ventilation’ in children received high needs scores (figure 1). Respondents rated ‘lectures without questions and answers’, ‘online podcasts’ and ‘journal clubs’ as ‘ineffective’ in improving knowledge and skills in pediatric anesthesia (table 1). Operating room based learning, problem based learning, simulation and workshops were rated as effective.

Discussion: The learning needs of pediatric anesthesia specialists have been identified and are being used to develop a curriculum aimed at enhancing their current knowledge, skills and patient management competencies. Furthermore, information on perceived ‘effectiveness’ of various teaching formats will be useful in the implementation of this program. The final results will be presented at the meeting.