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Research and evaluation
Assessment Strategies of Clinical Communication in Medical / Allied Health Sciences Students from Diverse Backgrounds: How do we improve?

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Abstract
Both anecdotally and in research, clinical supervisors, academic staff and indeed, students themselves, have reported difficulties with communication and language skills (Baker and Robson, 2012). Many diverse students fail to meet the professional standards required for effective communication with patients, supervisors and colleagues. This raises issues on how to accurately assess communication skills for the clinical context. A systematic review was conducted to identify clinical communication assessment practices of both academic and clinical teachers that have clearly described outcomes.

The review was based on the Cochrane systematic review protocol. The Best Evidence Medical Education (BEME) guide was used to assess the methodological quality of included assessment studies and the Kirkpatrick hierarchy was used to measure its impact. Articles were identified through a search of established databases using key search terms from 1990 to December 2013. Studies with students enrolled in a medical/ allied health/ nursing course, or were international medical graduates (IMG) in residency programs, and had been identified with low English Language Proficiency (ELP) or communication difficulties were included.

127 articles met the criteria for assessment and/or intervention for full text review. 84 articles were excluded. 16 articles on assessment were included in this review. Tools used to assess communication include observations of clinical or simulated patient interactions, and direct testing of language or English skills such as writing and oral skill examinations.

Research provides only a small number of methods to evaluate clinical communication skills. There is also great variance in the evaluation and reporting of outcomes. This is an area currently lacking much needed research.

Participants will be asked to bring their current clinical communication assessment methods. They will work in small groups to evaluate those methods using the BEME guide and Kirkpatrick Hierarchy. The results will inform discussion of new assessment methods.

References

Theme
Approaches to assessment in which students and staff participate in discussions about criteria and standards (theme 3)