

SHORT COMMUNICATION 

OSPE: Must know for the medical students – experience from a medical faculty in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSPE) is considered one of the most effective methodologies for the assessment of the clinical skills of medical students. It is the best way to examine clinical competence. Ideally, we use approximately 5 stations for the OSPE examination, but sometimes the number of stations may increase. Observers with agreed checklists having a suitable number of questions, mark the student's performance. This is a valid tool to assess clinical competency. This integrated evaluation process enhances the teacher-student interaction positively.

Keywords

Clinical competency, examination tool, marks, Objective Structured Practical Examination, station

Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSPE) is one of the effective methodologies for the assessment of the clinical skills of medical students. It is the best way to examine clinical competence. [1] In 1979 Ronald Harden first described the reliability, effectiveness and validity of OSPE. This practical based examination makes the medical graduate more skilled and confident. Nowadays in medical science, OSPE is a more preferred method compared to the conventional practice and written assessment process. [2-3]

By using this valid tool they can test the clinical competency in a better way. This integrated evaluation process enhances the teacher-student interaction positively; well-accepted checklists are selected for the scoring in this assessment method. One advantage of this tool is they can assess several students in a specific period. OSPE enhances students' clinical competence. Besides, this integrated tool is adaptable to the modern teaching curriculum. Precise organization and monitoring are the requirements to make this tool more effective and fair. [4-5] It is transparent and comprehensive, it reduces the chances of examiner bias and assesses the students' skills. OSPE is an assessment tool which evaluates the practical knowledge and skills of a student. It is used for the summative assessment of general experiments, to find out the suitability of this method of examination.

OSPE is an exam -flow process which evaluates the students by giving importance to individual ability. It is a multidimensional practical examination tool identification of equipment of experiment, the method of experiment, handling of instruments, making observations/results, interpretation of results and conclusion. OSPE can also assess practical skills better than a traditional examination, it provides a link between the gathering of knowledge and evaluation, they can evaluate practical knowledge through the use of OSPE.

Procedure

We use 5 stations for the OSPE examination, in every end of element and module tests. In Preclinical Professional Examination and end-of-year 1 final exam, total numbers of stations are 30-45. In a particular exam of a single course, all stations should be completed at the same time. The students are rotated among all stations when the bell rings. Thus, every station takes 5 minutes, it will increase the number of students examined within 1 hour as compared to the traditional practical examination system. Examiners use a checklist for the evaluation of the students, the checklist should be complete and include the main components, they should avoid any unnecessary and exaggerated terms. [6]

At all such stations, there are observers with agreed checklists to mark the student's performance, the examination committee of the department may formulate the checklist, having a suitable number of questions, marks for each of them and the total marks allocation to a station.

For Competency assessment

Sometimes subjects and materials are used instead of patients. Before examination instruction for the candidates must be clear and concise. Briefing about the process of the whole system is very much effective for successful OSPE. [6]

OSPE components:

1. Set up "Stations"
2. Communication stations: Communication ability of a student is assessed
3. Response stations: Interpretative ability of a student is assessed
4. Rest stations: To give the students a chance to organize their thoughts.
5. Duration of stations: Duration of stations has been fixed to make sure the task expected of the student can be accomplished within the time. 5 minutes stations are most frequently used. The time depends on the competencies to be assessed in the examination.
6. Simulated patient: A person playing the role of patients (simulated) can be used instead of actual patients, but it will be more reliable if many actual patients is possibly used.

Authors' contribution

NH, TA, EC designed the study, drafted the manuscript, and revised it. All authors critically revised the manuscript and approved the final document.

Competing interests

None declared.

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