



Comparison of Assessment Scores of Candidates for Communication Skills in an OSCE, by Examiners, Candidates and Simulated Patients

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ABSTRACT

Though OSCE method has been verified by several researchers for the appropriate assessment of competence in clinical skills, yet medical educationists have some concerns regarding the value of assessment of communication skills and empathy by this method. Hence, we sought to assess the extent of differences, if any, among the examiners, the candidates and the simulated patients (SPs) for communication skills. A total of 23 general practitioners, who were preparing for their postgraduate clinical examination, participated in a practice OSCE on seven stations in this study. The examiners observed and evaluated the candidates during the whole consultation, using the pre-tested checklist including 15 items with a global rating scale. The simulated patients also evaluated the candidates at the end of consultation, using the same checklist. There were significant differences in the assessment scores of candidates by the examiners, the candidates themselves and the simulated patients regarding all aspects of communication skills. However, introduction to the patient' s scenario of some non-verbal communication did not show any significant difference (p -value = > 0.05). The correlation between examiners and SPs ($r = 0.07$, $p = 0.7$) and SPs and candidates ($r = 0.01$, $p = 0.95$) was very low and not significant. Cronbach' s alpha was 0.968 across items, whereas among seven stations it was 0.931. This study has shown a significance difference in assessment scores of candidates by examiners, SPs and candidates themselves. In conclusion, there is a need for further research regarding the active role of SPs in summative assessments.

KEYWORDS

Assessment by Simulated Patients; Empathy; Communication Skills; OSCE

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