

Virtual OSCE Delivery – the way of the future?



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Background

The Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) is considered one of the most important modalities in the summative assessment of medical students. As successful completion of the OSCE was required for graduation of four deferral and supplemental Year 4 students, an online OSCE was offered to ensure physical distancing, the safety of participants, and timely delivery.

What we tried

The exam consisted of six clinical encounters and one full post encounter probe (PEP). Standardized checklists were adapted to facilitate the online delivery. The students were instructed to verbalize physical examination steps and manoeuvres, appropriate to the clinical scenario. Pre-standard setting of checklist items was done using a combination of Ebel and Angoff methods. Stations were operationalized using Zoom “Breakout Rooms”.

How did we evaluate it?

Feedback was obtained from participants during a post-OSCE in-person debrief session, as well as through questionnaires distributed after the examination.

What did we find?

Participants felt that the online examination was a comparable experience to the in-person OSCE. Some of the positive aspects reported were ease of use of the platform, the importance of the practice OSCE, effective communication between the students and the SPs during the encounter, ease of online assessment of student performance, and the appropriate use of examiner redirections in the physical examination stations. The lack of student performance of physical examination manoeuvres and inability of examiners to observe these skills in person were noted to be significant limitations by some participants.

Conclusion

A fully digital year-end comprehensive assessment provided a rich and impactful formative assessment during a time of disruption, and modifications made by necessity created unexpected advantages

What main lessons did we learn?

- One key to the success of this online OSCE was the selection of reliable, previously tested stations
- Care should be taken to adequately plan the logistics of distribution and completion of examiner checklists