Flexible assessment: including patient scores in the OSCE

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Introduction

There is a continual need to improve the reliability and robustness of examinations, including objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs).

- Volunteer patients used in OSCEs feel it is important for their feedback to be given to students but that they do not want to influence the overall exam results\(^1\).
- Patients assess different aspects of student performance to that of examiners\(^2\).
- Flexible use of patient assessment has the potential to provide valuable information to both students and assessors and it may be that including patient assessment of students could increase the reliability of assessments\(^3\).
- The aim of the project was to identify whether the information provided by patient scores could provide additional, meaningful information in flexible assessment and feedback.

Methods

- Volunteer/simulated patient marks from three OSCEs in different year groups (n= 533 students) analysed
- Patients asked to score students on a 1-4 scale, based on interpersonal skills rather than medical knowledge
- Scores were converted into a percentage – patient global score (PGS)
- 70% was the acceptable cut off score

Results

- Reliability (correlation coefficient) of the patient scores compared to the total OSCE score was 0.5-0.6
- Students with patient scores of less than 70% were identified in each OSCE
- Only 54-73% of those with low patient scores passed the OSCE
- A few students had high OSCE scores but very poor patient marks
- Patients reported high satisfaction with the new system

Discussion

The use of patient scores allows identification of students with possible problems with patient interaction who may not have been identified otherwise - giving an opportunity for timely remedial action to be taken. The patient perspective therefore provides a valuable addition to other modes of assessment for students and patients feel more highly valued as part of the assessment process.