

Topic: Opleiding en Permanente Vorming

Implementation of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination as internship assessment of fifth year pharmacy students

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Background:

A thorough and objective evaluation of the competencies of internship students is crucial for the development of competent healthcare professionals.

Objectives:

To implement and evaluate a 5-station OSCE as compulsory internship assessment of fifth year pharmacy students at the KU Leuven (June 2015).

Methodology:

After thorough preparation and pilot-testing of a proposal for an OSCE, a 5-station OSCE was implemented. Students were asked to counsel well-trained standardized patients, pharmacists or pharmacy technicians during maximum 8 minutes. Following competencies were evaluated using standardized checklists with case-specific criteria and 'penalty points': patient counseling activities, problem-solving skills, pharmacotherapeutic, pharmacokinetic and pharmacotechnology approach. Students failed if they failed on three or more cases or if the mean score over five cases was <50%.

Interactive training sessions were organized during the academic year to discuss the new evaluation with internship supervisors. Supervisors were also asked to participate in the OSCE evaluation as co-examiners, and to give feedback on content and format of the OSCE evaluation.

Results:

Out of the 116 fifth year students (97 women vs. 19 men; 85 students Pharmaceutical Care vs. 31 students Drug Development), 101 students passed the exam on their first attempt (87,1%). The median score of the 5-station OSCE was 18,6/30 (IQR=3,7). Final scores varied widely between students (min-max: 11,4 – 23,3).

Participating internship supervisors mentioned following strengths of the OSCE exam: broad assessment of a wide set of competencies; real-life evaluation of theoretical knowledge and counselling skills; objective representation of student's performance; broad content coverage.

Limitations were: intensive way of evaluation for student and examiner; time pressure and stress for students.

Conclusion:

An OSCE has been successfully implemented in the pharmacy program of the KU Leuven. Although examination results were similar with the pilot study, one could worry about the low scores and unmet, expected competencies of novice pharmacists.