

Letters to the Editor

Faculty perception of the medical student situational judgement test — Summary of findings

Dear Sir

The situational judgement test (SJT) is a mandatory assessment for all exiting medical students in the UK, designed to assess whether they demonstrate the professional attributes of a newly qualified foundation doctor (Sharma 2015). Furthermore, scores derived from this test are utilised to determine job placement.

The aim of our study was to assess faculty perception of the SJT using a mixed methods format. Eight faculty members agreed to take part and were provided with an online survey to complete. The results of quantitative analysis demonstrated mean scores of 2.63–3.38 based on whether they felt the test was a worthwhile measure of its stated attributes, namely: Commitment to professionalism, coping with pressure, effective communication, learning and professional development, organisation and planning, patient focus, problem solving and decision making, self-awareness and insight and working effectively as part of a team courtesy of the strongly disagree to strongly agree Likert scale (1 (strongly disagree)–5 (strongly agree)).

Qualitative analysis demonstrated concerns allied to option ranking, an inability to convey real life situations accurately, a desire to standardise medical school teaching throughout the UK as opposed to additional testing, an inability to test how doctors would actually behave, issues related to being taught how to pass the test and a lack of evidence currently linking SJT scores with better performance during foundation training.

In conclusion, this pilot study has demonstrated significant concerns regarding the implementation of the SJT as a form of assessment. At present, this test is a UK-based requirement. The findings concluded by faculty are in keeping with a similar student-based study (Sharma 2015). If this test is to continue as a form of job allocation, further research is needed to demonstrate to both parties its actual merit in ensuring improved performance during foundation training and ultimately patient care.

Ethical approval by QMUL London UK, QMREC 1257.

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Reference

Sharma N. 2015. Medical students' perceptions of the situational judgement test: A mixed methods study. *Br J Hosp Med (Lond)* 76(4):234–238.

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Ocular fundus photography: An alternative to direct ophthalmoscopy for teaching?

Dear Sir

The direct ophthalmoscope is a valuable tool that can aid in the diagnosis of important sight and life threatening conditions. However, direct ophthalmoscopy is an ophthalmic skill that is difficult to master and is poorly performed even by senior physicians in primary care or emergency departments. Yet, ironically, one of the competences of the UK Foundation Programme Curriculum states that the foundation doctor should demonstrate 'accomplished and targeted examination skills and appropriate use of equipment, including an ophthalmoscope' (UKFPO 2010).

UK undergraduate ophthalmology education is very limited therefore, it is not realistic to expect medical students to achieve a level of competence using the direct ophthalmoscope in such a short period of time, let alone recognizing important ocular pathology. Several techniques and approaches including qualitative and quantitative feedback,