Original Article

Students’ Perception Regarding Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

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Abstract

Objective: To determine the perception of students regarding OSCE as method of assessment.

Subjects and Methods: A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted in Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department of Islamabad Medical and Dental College regarding OSCE final professional examination in February 2015. Data was collected on self administered questionnaire distributed to the student at the end of OSCE examination. Opinion of students was taken regarding OSCE as method of examination. Data was analysed using SPSS version 16.

Results: Among 100 participants, 80(80%) considered OSCE as fair mode of examination, 85(85%) said it covered a wide range of skills, clinical and theoretical knowledge. Regarding the advantages of OSCE, 78 (78%) said it is a type of examination that is easy to pass as compared to viva exam as multiple tasks give more chance to pass, 82(82%) consider OSCE a better than simple viva examination as in OSCE they appear in both static and interactive stations while in viva their verbal skills count in passing the examination. However 69% found OSCE exhausting and lengthy and 88(88%) found it to be more stressful.

Conclusion: In spite of being stressful, OSCE is considered as fair and better method of examination by students as it covers wide range of skill and improves the clinical knowledge.

Key words: Assessment method, Objective structured clinical examination OSCE, Students, Students’ opinion.

Introduction

OSCE is being adapted by many medical schools worldwide as a method of assessment. It is a versatile evaluation tool for medical students. OSCE was developed to address the lack of general ability associated with traditional clinical assessment such as long case. OSCE is now considered as gold standard performance based assessment. It is a mode of examination which is based on time and involves multiple tasking.

During OSCE examination all candidates are exposed to the same tasks, to be completed in the same time frame and are scored using structured marking sheets. This not only helps in assessment of students but also provides a powerful influence on future learning. Modern theory of education also emphasises that integration of multiple tasks in OSCE help in learning by students. In OSCE examination students show their competence regarding medical knowledge, communication skills and performing various procedures.

Owing to its importance it has been incorporated in medical training of students. Studies have shown that students also feel that OSCE covers a wide range of topics. OSCE is a useful teaching tool involving safe practice, that helps students to gain confidence in hospital environment. Various researchers believe that since the start of OSCE in 1975, it has been a variable, valid and an objective examination. OSCE can be used not only as an assessment tool but also as an effective learning tool. This study was designed to determine the perception of students regarding OSCE as method of assessment.

Subjects & Methods

This prospective cross sectional study was conducted on final year MBBS at Islamabad Medical and Dental College. After taking informed consent all final year students at the end of OSCE examination were included in this study. OSCE annual examination was conducted for four days in Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department. Students were divided in four groups of 25 each as per rule of university. After completion of OSCE examination students were given proforma to fill regarding their experience and their views of OSCE examination.

OSCE examination consisted of 14 stations. Among them 8 were static and 6 were interactive stations as per university instructions. Students were given five minutes on each
station. Due to 4 days of examinations new set of OSCE had to be displayed daily, but basic pattern of assessment was same.

Interactive stations included
1- Gynaecology counselling station (role model)
2- Obstetrics counselling station (role model)
3- Gynaecology scenario discussion
4- Obstetrics scenario discussion
5- Gynaecology hands on performance (on dummies)
6- Obstetrics hands on performance (on dummies)

Static stations included
Four Gynaecology theory related (clinical scenario based, pictures, X-rays, specimens)
Four Obstetrics theory related (Clinical scenario based, pictures)

At the end of examination questionnaire was distributed among students.

Data was analysed on statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 16. Percentages were calculated for descriptive variables and t test was used to compare the means with percentage of 95%. p value<0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results
Results of this study showed that out of 100 students 80(80%) considered OSCE as fair mode of examination, 85(85%) said it covered a wide range of skills, clinical and theoretical knowledge. Regarding the advantages of OSCE 78 (78%) said it is a type of examination that is easy to pass as compared to viva exam as multiple tasks give more chance to pass, 82 (82%) said it is better than simple viva examination as in OSCE they appear in both static and interactive stations while in viva their verbal skills count in passing the examination.

Table 1: Perception of students regarding OSCE examination (n 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ perception regarding OSCE examination</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair mode of examination</td>
<td>80(80%)</td>
<td>20(20%)</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE covers wide range of skills</td>
<td>85(85%)</td>
<td>15(15%)</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to pass</td>
<td>78(78%)</td>
<td>22(22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better than simple viva(in terms of assessment)</td>
<td>82(82%)</td>
<td>18(18%)</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More useful and relevant</td>
<td>86(86%)</td>
<td>14(14%)</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better with real patients</td>
<td>75(75%)</td>
<td>25(25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE should be followed as method of assessment</td>
<td>89(89%)</td>
<td>11(11%)</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhausting and lengthy</td>
<td>69(69%)</td>
<td>21(21%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More stressful than viva</td>
<td>88(88%)</td>
<td>12(12%)</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of students 86(86%) considered it more useful and relevant to the type of skills required by the students during house job and in post-graduation training and 89(89%) recommended it to be followed as method of assessment. However 69(69%) found OSCE exhausting and lengthy and 88(88%) found it to be more stressful. P value was calculated for means and it was found to be statistically significant.

Students’ perception regarding OSCE examination is shown in detail with p value in table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of OSCE are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Advantages and disadvantages of OSCE as expressed by the students (n 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages of OSCE</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSCE accepted by students as method of assessment</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE is not biased by examiner</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE improves clinical knowledge of gynaecology</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE is associated with more conceptual learning</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages of OSCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to manage time</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
Objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) is becoming a popular method of assessment in health care education. It is now a days an important method for assessment of competence in undergraduate medical education. At the end of session especially in clinical subjects, testing a wide range of skills is required. This includes making a diagnosis, investigation interpretation, communication skills, instruments identification and performing certain procedures. OSCE is considered as a feasible tool for assessment of clinical competence for formative and summative purpose, that is why it is considered as a versatile multipurpose evaluation method to assess the competency of students.

Studies have shown that OSCE is considered as a fair examination method as indicated in our study. It was seen that majority of students 80(80%) considered it to be a fair examination because everyone is assessed on the same kind of patient and all the questions are the same even at the viva voce stations.

In our study 85(85%) students stated that OSCE covered a wide range of skills. Our study coincides with study conducted by Javaid M et al, who state that in the opinion of students OSCE covers wide range of skills including history taking, planning investigations, interpretation of investigations and communication skills. All these skills are required by medical students in their future medical practice. Our current study observed that majority of students found OSCE examination to be mentally exhausting 69 (69%) and more stressful 89(89%). Results of our study are compared with results of a study stating OSCE to be more stressful and intimidating. A positive perspective regarding stressful
situation of OSCE was given by Bartfay et al., in his study stating that performing OSCE in stressful situation enables students to perform competently. In another study adequate preparation of OSCE by students was found to be a method to overcome anxiety and fear of examination. Regarding the examination method it was found that majority of students stated OSCE examination was better with real patients than with simulators. According to them simulators were not able to give answers to some of their questions and they were more comfortable with real patients. Another study found that using the standardised patients in OSCE there is a risk of making the encounter artificial. Majority of our students agreed that OSCE is a useful examination and relevant to their curriculum. Relevance was described to the type of practical work that the students will be dealing with during their house job and post-graduation. Students also gave their opinion that in terms of learning OSCE to be better than viva examination and to be followed as method of assessment. A study conducted in Oman found OSCE to be a superior mode of examination as it involves multiple competences to be assessed, that makes OSCE a good method of assessment. In terms of learning, OSCE is found better than viva examination.

**Conclusion**

OSCE is a better mode of examination than viva. OSCE should be used along with viva as supplementing this method of examination, as it is not biased and is associated with more conceptual learning.

**References**

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