

How Reliable Is the Assessment of Medical Students' Professionalism by Simulated Patients

Soumendra Sahoo¹, Minoo Pothen², Rashmirekha Sahoo³, Saurabh Srivastava⁴, Mil Nu Htay⁵

Manipal University College Malaysia (MUCM), Malaysia

Abstract

Purpose of research

During simulated patient (SP)-student encounters, the students learn more than just communication skills; the interaction with SPs contributes to their professional and personal identity development. The simulated patients when used during professional examination can be the right person to assess professionalism of the examining students. Hence the research was needed to find reliability of their assessment of professionalism of students.

Method of research

The students' professionalism was assessed during the OSCE by two independent assessors. The assessors, i.e, simulated patients and examiners, assessed for each student. The professionalism for the OSCE physical examination station was assessed by previously validated scale, Medical Students' Professionalism Assessment Scale (MSPAS). Descriptive analysis of the scorings provided by two assessors were analysed with mean, standard deviation, median, interquartile range, minimum, and maximum. The internal consistency of physical examination professionalism assessment scale was assessed with Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient. Alpha coefficient was 0.60 for simulated patients' assessment and 0.92 for examiners assessment. Since the rating was based on the ordinal scale, the agreement between the two assessors were analysed by using quadratic weighted kappa statistics.

Main Results

The mean scores were similar in both simulated patients and examiners assessment. The highest difference was observed in the item 5, in which simulated patients' assessment mean score was 0.10, while examiners assessment mean score was 0.48. In terms of agreement, the item 3 "The student gave clear instructions before examining me" reached a moderate concordance (agreement). While other items achieved fair concordance in between the assessors. While other items achieved fair concordance in between the assessors. The p value of the items ranged from <0.001 and 0.006, which were significant in all items.

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Conclusion

Although majority of the SP ratings were correlated with ratings by tutor, periodic training to SP can further enhance their reliability as assessor of professionalism shown by medical students.

Keywords: OSCE, professionalism, assessment, simulated patient, medical students