

Session A2:

Tests and prediction of student succes

Paper 05

What can we learn from data about MMI raters' subjectivity when they make decisions about candidates' potential?

Program text

In this qualitative study, we suggest that 'taste' is an inevitable condition in the assessment of medical school candidates and students' performance.

Abstract

Recent years have seen leading medical educationalists repeatedly call for a paradigm shift in the way we view, value and use subjectivity in assessment. The argument is that subjective expert raters generally bring desired quality, not just noise, to performance evaluations. While several reviews document the psychometric qualities of the Multiple Mini-Interview (MMI), we currently lack qualitative studies examining what we can learn from MMI raters' subjectivity.

The present qualitative study therefore investigates rater subjectivity or taste in MMI selection interview. Taste (Bourdieu, 1984) is a practical sense, which makes it possible at a pre-reflective level to apply 'invisible' or 'tacit' categories of perception for distinguishing between good and bad.

The study draws on data from explorative in-depth interviews with 12 purposefully selected MMI raters. We find that MMI raters spontaneously applied subjective criteria – their taste – enabling them to assess the candidates' interpersonal attributes and to predict the candidates' potential. In addition, MMI raters seemed to share a taste for certain qualities in the candidates (e.g. reflectivity, resilience, empathy, contact, alikeness, 'the good colleague'); hence, taste may be the result of an ongoing enculturation in medical education and healthcare systems.

This study suggests that taste is an inevitable condition in the assessment of students' performance. The MMI set-up should therefore make room for MMI raters' taste and their connoisseurship, i.e. their ability to taste, to improve the quality of their assessment of medical school candidates.

Authors

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Literature

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