

BCM Educational Innovations Day 2014

Title: A Novel Approach to Case-Writing in the End-of-Clerkship Clinical Performance Exam – Going from Disease-based to Complaint-based Cases

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Needs/Measurable objectives: Clinical performance examinations (CPX) have been integrated into every core clerkship to enhance the summative evaluation for our medical students. It is necessary to have multiple case versions of each to preserve the integrity of the exam. With multiple case versions, we must ensure equivalency between the cases. We describe our experience creating and revising cases, and the improvement in case equivalency when cases are written as complaint-based with focus on clinical reasoning rather than diagnosis-based.

Description of the project: During a one and a half year period, the surgery clerkship director, with assistance from the Director of Educational Research and the Medical Director of the Simulation Program, wrote 6 initial disease-based cases to be used for the end of clerkship CPX. However, the cases were found to not be equivalent when analyzed. Therefore, after discussion of goals and key cases items, 3 cases were rewritten to be complaint-based with no specific correct diagnosis.

Discussion: Analysis for the cases demonstrated that the 3 revised complaint-based cases were now equivalent as compared to the initial 6 disease-based cases. Anecdotally, these revised cases continue to be challenging for the students and are thought to simulate real-world clinical decision making better than the disease-based cases that have a “right answer.” This method of case-writing is novel in this setting as cases are usually written with specific, clerkship specific diagnoses in mind. This process can serve a model for other clerkships as well as other formative or summative cases with emphasis on the clinical reasoning and process rather than final diagnosis.