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PREFERENCE OF ORAL EXAMINATION (VIVA VOCE) AS AN ASSESSMENT TYPE IN THE CLINICAL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE MEDICAL SCHOOLS IN SRI LANKA

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Introduction

Evaluation is concerned with the application of its findings and implies some judgment on the effectiveness, social utility or desirability of a product, process or programme in terms of carefully defined and agreed-upon objectives or value.¹ Assessment is a fact-finding activity that describes the conditions that exist at a particular time.¹

There are mainly three methods of assessment, i.e., written, observation and oral methods. The written or 'Pen and Paper' method includes essay and multiple-choice questions. The observation method is used in clinical and practical examinations. The choice of examination method depends on the purpose of evaluation, the domain of educational objectives to be tested and feasibility, validity and objectivity of the method.²

Oral Examination (viva voce) is traditionally an integral part of the evaluation in preclinical, Para clinical and clinical phases.² Nevertheless education authors nowadays criticize and try to expel this method of assessment because it involves personal contact between the examiners and the students. It also suffers from serious limitations such as Questions are not standardized as regards to the level of difficulty, lack of objectivity and time consuming in nature.

Objective

The main objective of this study is to find out the preference of Viva voce as an assessment

type in clinical teaching and learning in Sri Lankan Medical Schools.

Methodology

This study was conducted by giving the interview administered Questionnaires to 16 clinical teachers from five Medical schools in Sri Lanka. They were requested to select the different clinical skills for which viva voce is the preferred choice of assessment. The collected data were then analyzed.(see table)

Component of clinical skill	No. of preference	Percentage (%)
History taking	02	12.5
Examination skill	-	-
Communication	14	87.5
Handling Emergency	10	62.5
Critical thinking	14	87.5
Research	14	87.5
Management/Protocol	-	-
Team work	07	43.75

Table: The component of clinical skills and the number of candidates selected the viva voce for their assessment.

Results

Out of 16 candidates 14 of them preferred viva voce for the assessment of communication, Critical thinking and Research. Ten of them preferred it for handling emergency. To all of

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them it was not a preferred choice for the assessment of examination skill and Management/Protocol.

Discussion

The main purpose of designing a system of student assessment in medical schools is to make the assessment procedures congruent with educational goals and instructional principals. Different authors, including great reformers in medical education in the early part of last century, emphasized that student's learning was largely influenced by examinations.^{3,4}

The Student Assessments are performed at two levels,

1. Formative Assessment, which is performed during the course of study.
2. Summative Assessment is performed at the end of the course of study.

This analysis however is done irrespective of this difference.

Viva Voce has its shortcomings. The examiners are free to place any questions within the framework of the study, and expect the form of answer which has already been synthesized by them. The students too, if failed the examination, may blame the examiner for asking "Difficult Questions".

In this study 87.5% of the Clinical teachers preferred viva voce for assessing certain clinical components. All those components are important since they deal with communication skills, individualized care & research.

Viva voce is still a preferred choice of assessment of emergency care and team work. This indicates that this method of assessment has gained its place. The positive features for this type of assessment can be that it is an easy method for organizing questions and does not

involve much preparation, when compared to the much spoken method OSCE.

Conclusion:

Our study reveals that for many clinical teachers viva voce is a convenient method of assessment in clinical teaching and learning. This method should be modified in a schematic way with well structured questions and involving a number of examiners whenever possible, so that bias in its performance can be eliminated.

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