



THE ROYAL
COLLEGE OF
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The Faculty of Surgical Trainers



FST/ASME Educational Research Grant Report 2020 - 21

KJ Baatjes

FST/ASME Educational Research Grant Report 2020-21

RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENT

KJ Baatjes

DEPARTMENT

Surgical Sciences, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

PROJECT TITLE

Real-life procedural videos: an additional assessment tool for structured oral examinations of surgical trainees?

SUMMARY

Background:

The COVID pandemic provided opportunities for innovation in the postgraduate surgical teaching program. Expansion of traditional teaching methods by the addition of educational procedural videos as a learning tool seemed fitting. The real-life recordings also have the potential to be utilised during the surgical mock oral assessment. These recordings of real-life surgical procedures have the extra benefit of remote application thereby limiting person-to-person contact as well as long distance travel to exam venues in wide geographical areas. The pandemic further stimulates revision of teaching and assessment programs in the surgical curriculum, but thorough evaluation of such decisions should be researched.

Method:

This study explored the experiences of surgical trainees and specialists at a South African university and tertiary hospital, of the video assisted structured mock oral assessments, both in a face to face and on-line format.

Conclusion:

The preliminary findings showed that the participants were positive about this initiative of utilizing procedural videos as part of the mock oral assessments, but the participants believed there were certain limitations to the use of it. They suggested more attention be given to technical aspects of videos in the assessment with regards to the producing and editing of the videos.

RESEARCH GRANT REPORT

A) Clinical and Scientific Significance of Advances Made

The study aimed to explore the experiences and perspectives of surgical registrars and consultants in a tertiary academic hospital in South Africa, of structured mock oral assessments utilizing video recordings, both in a face to face and on-line format. In this study, data was produced by means of individual interviews and focus groups. Findings indicate that this approach was well-received by both the students and the examiners during this mock assessment. Suggestions towards improving the assessment practices in the department are as follows:

- Structured examiner training before every examination
- Suggested questions made available to all the examiners before the examination
- Videos that are used should all be edited
- Feedback should be included as part of the mock examination

The significance of the study will be evident as soon as the suggestions listed above have been implemented. It is however anticipated that better assessment practices will lead to better qualified surgeons and ultimately better patient outcomes.

B) Problems Encountered and Steps Taken to Overcome Them

On the day of data collection, several consultants and registrars were called away to clinical duties just prior to starting and some during the examination. Similarly, it took careful planning to arrange the individual interviews with the clinically busy consultants. This is a stark reflection of the nature of doing research in the clinically active domain. We proceeded with the examinations and could complete the session as well as the focus group and interviews.

Another challenge was structured examiner training. Due to the busy schedules of the examiners some of them did not get proper examiner training and they then did not prepare the questions related to the videos well.

C) Collaborations Established

In the process of doing the research, the researchers that are part of the Department of Surgery built close relationships with the Centre for Health Professions Education staff. These collaborations will continue in the future.

D) Publications and Presentations

The project was presented at the Annual Academic day of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University.

Format: Poster, Virtual

Abstract:

Real-life procedural videos: an additional assessment tool for structured oral examinations of surgical trainees.

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Background

Surgical registrars are assessed before acceptance to the South African College of Surgeons, with oral examination as a main component. Concerns with regards to the reliability and validity of this method, remains. Structured oral examinations (SOE), based on a clinical case with pre-defined questions and goals, is reproducible. Adding procedural videos to the SOE may allow for greater depth of enquiry of the candidate's knowledge.

This study explored the experiences of a group of surgical registrars and the consultants (examiners), utilizing video assisted structured oral assessments, in a face-to-face and virtual manner.

Method

The descriptive study was undertaken at the Division of Surgery at Stellenbosch University. Institutional ethics approval was obtained (N20/09/090). All registrars and consultants in the division were invited to a voluntary mock assessment, followed by a discussion of their experience. One group had face-to-face contact and the second group was tested virtually on Microsoft Teams™. This was followed by a focus group interview with the registrars, and individual interviews with the consultants. On the day of the mock examination, several members were called to clinical duties leading to a final participant number of 8 consultants and 12 registrars. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by means of a thematic analysis process.

Results

The significant findings were: videos can play a role in assessment, standardization is possible, pre-exam preparation for the examiner is critical, the technical aspects need to be addressed and registrars appreciated the feedback given to them during the sessions.

Conclusions

Consultants and registrars found the use of videos during oral assessment valuable, however more planning and preparation is required from the consultants' point of view. While both the face-to-face and virtual oral assessments were experienced positively, it seems as if the registrars preferred to have the examiners with them in the same room.

E) Acknowledgments

Consultants and registrars of the division who freely participated and engaged in the project. The team also acknowledges receipt of the grant from the Faculty of Surgical Trainers at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and the Association for the Study of Medical Education.



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