

OSCE stations at the Department for FM in Ljubljana

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The Department for Family Medicine at the University of Ljubljana Medical Faculty has been utilizing the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) method for the past 25 years to assess the skills of its students and trainees in a simulated real clinical environment. The level of difficulty of the OSCE stations is adjusted to students and trainees, respectively.

In 2020, the Medical Faculty introduced clinical practice for students in the first and second year. This means that students learn and practice skills on real patients under the guidance of their mentors in clinical settings. Thus they have double opportunity to learn skills: from the first year, they learn in real clinical settings, in the 6th grade, we summarize and improve their skills using OSCE stations.

The examinations, including the OSCE stations, are conducted in the department by teaching assistants and teachers. Candidates move from one station to another and have limited time to demonstrate each skill. The OSCE stations for students include measuring blood pressure, preparing injections for subcutaneous application, interpreting laboratory results, and assessing alcohol consumption. For trainees, more advanced clinical experiences are used, such as wound stitching on a model, explaining investigations to patients, interpreting ECGs, and prescribing medications.

OSCE stations are a good way of covering different parts of the curriculum. They are useful for testing clinical, problem-solving and communication and interpretation skills, in an objective and structured way. They help raise self-awareness through reflection on self performance. In addition, the fact that each station has its own examiner or assessor reduces the examiner bias.

However, there are challenges associated with the OSCE stations, as it is a time-consuming method and many people need to cooperate. The department requires enough teaching assistants and role players to perform communication skills, and the logistics of running an OSCE session can be challenging. And for all the stations, the rooms need to be prepared and the materials arranged.

Our department is participating in the Dominos Erasmus project, which aims to create an international pool of OSCE stations and an e-platform for students to learn and practice skills.

The pool of OSCE stations in the department is being revised and upgraded to incorporate changes and new methods in clinical medicine. Communication, multidisciplinary, and telemedicine stations are being added to the pool to enhance the learning experience of students and trainees.

In summary, OSCE is a useful method for both formative follow-up and summative assessment, enabling comprehensive approach to learning and evaluation.