

OSCEs exam before and after the COVID-19 pandemic - our experience

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Background: The Objective Structured Clinical Exams (OSCEs) which usually require a face-to-face assessment of skills posed a special challenge to health professionals in COVID 19.

Aim: We aimed to describe our experience in conducting physical OSCEs during the COVID-19 pandemic keeping in place COVID precautions to ensure the most wellbeing of all participants involved

Methods: The original 'pre Covid' examination blueprint was reviewed and modified for the virtual environment in both format and content. Special measures and resources following National Infection control and preventions measures were put in place to conduct safe OSCEs.

Results: 78 trainees attended OSCEs exam in 8 exams terms, during June 2020-March 2022. Number of stations was the same, but stations with inhalation techniques were not used (or they verbalized the techniques skill) and the number of simulated patients was reduced. The number of examiners was reduced in some stations where the doctor has to demonstrate use of growth charts or medication prescription. Additionally, trainees were divided into smaller groups if necessary and social distancing was strictly implemented. Each OSCE room was ventilated appropriately and the examiner, trainee, and simulated patient followed proper hand hygiene and social distancing norms. Masks were mandatory for the duration of the exam. There were no reported cases of COVID-19 transmission among trainees and examiners during the OSCE assessments.

Conclusion

Owing to the implementation of clear and strong measures, it was feasible to conduct OSCEs, and there were no reported cases of COVID-19 transmission. The limitation of assessing some particular types of skills (such as inhalation techniques) was recognized.

Keywords: Assessment; OSCE; COVID-19.