

British Journal of Pharmacy

www.bjpharm.hud.ac.uk

Book Review

Pharmacy OSCEs and Competency-Based Assessments by Sharon Haughey and Roisin O'Hare

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 03/04/2018
Revised: 24/04/2018
Accepted: 15/05/2018
Published: 26/11/2018

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KEYWORDS: OSCEs;
Dispensing; Medicine
Reconciliation; Medicine
Optimisation; Prescribing
Skills

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, the pharmacists' role has been revolutionised utilising and incorporating expert clinical skills and knowledge. In doing so, a pharmacist's performance is underpinned by competence and must be assessed in a valid and reliable manner throughout the undergraduate degree and preregistration year prior to becoming a responsible practitioner. The Observed Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) is a practical assessment method evaluating student application of knowledge and understanding of the content in a simulated real-life environment. 'Pharmacy OSCEs and competency-based assessments' by Haughey and O'Hare is a novel book which endeavours to enhance the use of this method of assessment in pharmacy education.

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The pharmacy profession has evolved from a purely medication supply based role to a more clinical, patient centred and values member of the multidisciplinary team. Therefore, pharmacy education has dramatically changed in line with the demands of the profession. The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) of Great Britain have established performance standards for undergraduate students (GPhC, 2011) which must be met by each student and use the miller's triangle theory to assess competence (Miller 1990). Competency based assessment is set at the heart of healthcare professional education and training to ensure practitioners are 'fit for purpose'.

A pharmacist's performance is underpinned by competence and must be assessed in a valid and reliable manner throughout the undergraduate degree and preregistration year prior to becoming a responsible practitioner. Assessment plays a major role in students' development and influence on what students learn. It is used to measure and evaluate

student knowledge, understanding and shapes what learning take place hence effective assessment must be integrated into the curriculum and be a part of the learning process. Authentic and original assessment focuses on the development and integration of practical and clinical skills in the real-world environment. The OSCE (Observed Structured Clinical Examination) assessment sits within the 'shows how' level of Miller's triangle where students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content taught putting these into real life context within a simulated environment. The OSCE enables effective assessment of student behaviour, professional attitude and skills necessary for professional practice. 'Pharmacy OSCEs and competency-based assessments' by Haughey and O'Hare is a new addition to the understanding and development of this assessment technique and encourages an integrated approach in its implementation.

This book provides guidance on developing OSCEs based assessments for pharmacy students at varying levels, from undergraduate and beyond. The book is equally valuable for students for their learning and for teaching staff who are looking for ideas to create new assessments. The initial chapter sets the scene emphasising the importance of OSCE and competency based assessments within pharmacy education. The book is split into chapters which tackle different OSCE stations covering a range of topics. Topics include, dispensing practice and clinical check, responding to symptoms in the pharmacy, medicines reconciliation and optimisation, inter- and intra- professional assessments and prescribing skills. Each chapter describes an OSCE station in depth providing examples, both community and hospital based, and how to fully answer each station while achieving the specific GPhC competencies. The authors have also included sample mark schemes to demonstrate the appropriate assessment process and highlighting common errors which can be made. One particularly interesting aspect of the book is the inclusion of ethical dilemmas as part of the OSCE stations which are essential professional skills for pharmacy students. An improvement for the next edition would be to include coloured images to depict skin rashes used in the responding to symptoms OSCE station.

The penultimate chapter encompasses prescribing skills, looking at consultations skills and appropriate prescribing of medications. The final chapter encompasses competency based assessments which address assessments in an integrated manner looking at one single case study but involving all aspects vital to pharmacy i.e. physiology and pharmacology, medicinal chemistry, pharmaceuticals as well as clinical therapeutics, evidence based medicine and patient counselling skills.

Overall, the first edition of this book is a welcome and invaluable resource for students and academic staff alike to incorporate this enhanced assessment method centred on competency and clinical practice. The engaging content and complete examples of varying complexities involving different aspects of pharmacy practice are the focal qualities of this book that enhance the use of this resource and its relativity to pharmacy practice.

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