Teaching Tips

Department of Family & Social Medicine Faculty Development E-Newsletter
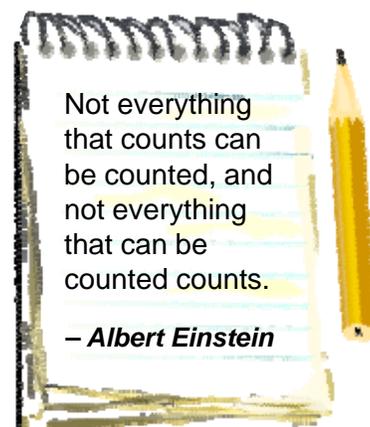
Challenges of Assessment of Clinical Performance

For many reasons, assessment in medical education is difficult and can be especially challenging in the clinical setting.

Challenges of Producing Written Evaluations of Clinical Performance

Limited time… limited direct observation… multiple preceptors… weighting criteria… developmental levels… difficulty giving negative feedback… influence of a student's personality or her desire to pursue a career in family medicine…. These were all issues generated by teaching faculty at our recent *What is Honors?* faculty development workshop.

A 2007 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* presented strengths and limitations of assessments by supervising clinicians. Some of these will look familiar. But, when used in conjunction with written exercises, multi-source assessments, and clinical simulations, we are able to provide valid assessments of a student's performance.

Future faculty development efforts will focus on some of these challenges. Stay tuned…

> Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.
>
> *– Albert Einstein*

References / Resources:

Epstein, R. M. (2007). Assessment in Medical Education, *N Engl J Med*; 356: 387-396.

Method	Domain	Type of Use	Limitations	Strengths
Global ratings with comments at end of rotation	Clinical skills, communication, teamwork, presentation skills, organization, work habits	Global summative and sometimes formative assessments in clinical rotations	Often based on second-hand reports and case presentation rather than on direct observation, subjective	Use of multiple independent raters can overcome some variability due to subjectivity
Structured direct observation with checklists for ratings	Communication skills, clinical skills	Limited use in clerkships and residencies, a few board-certification examinations	Selective rather than habitual behaviors observed, relatively time-consuming	Feedback provided by credible experts *From: Epstein (2007)*