

Medical Students' Performance in the IV Year Exit Exam: Effect of Clinical Reasoning Exercises, Self-Observation on Tape, and Faculty Feedback on Clinical Skills

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ABSTRACT

The Clinical Performance Examination (CPeX) is administered at the end of the IV year required Internal Medicine Clerkship. The exam consists of eight standardized patient encounters, during which the students are required to perform a focused history and physical exam based on the patient presenting complaint. A remediation plan consisting of the following steps was developed for students who fail the exam:

Step I: Students' performance review.

Step II: Clinical reasoning exercise assignment.

Step III: Formative feedback session with self-observation on videotape.

Step IV: Additional faculty-guided clinical reasoning exercise.

During the academic year 2002-03, 21 students out of 191 (11%) failed the initial CPeX. The students who failed went through the remediation process and retook the exam. The post-remediation exam scores show significant improvement in both history and physical examination skills. We conclude that: clinical reasoning exercises help students understand how to choose the most important components of the history and physical exam to best delineate the patient's problem and to develop a differential diagnosis; self observation on tape helps the student to gain an awareness of their deficiencies and to focus on their own areas of weakness; and formative feedback plays a central role in aiding students to improve their performance, as widely supported by the literature.
