Reviewer's report

Title: An integrative OSCE methodology for enhancing the traditional OSCE program at Taipei Medical University Hospital

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Reviewer: Fabrizio Consorti

Reviewer's report:

The paper addresses the very relevant topic of assessment of clinical competence and is based on an interesting idea of multimodal integration of tools of assessment but it reports only about a limited experience with 30 students, investigating their perception of usefulness and feelings. This limitation should be clearly reflected in the title, with terms like “pilot study” and “students' preferences”. The paper is also weak from a theoretical point of view.

Major compulsory revisions

1. Research question
The research question is not clearly posed. The Authors state “the current study aims to improve the way to assess examinees and focuses on their perceptions of the OSCE stations' effectiveness in evaluating competencies without substantial investments in training faculty and students”. The study cannot demonstrate that this method of assessment is better than another one, but only that it is feasible and that students are satisfied with. The aim to improve the way to assess is probably an overall strategy, in which the study is framed.

2. Framework
2.1 Despite the statement “iOSCE is a methodology which combines the currently used OSCE at hospitals around the world with an integrated, informative, investigative and innovative approach by using both virtual and standardized patients”, the idea of integrating virtual patients into an OSCE setting is not new. A simple PubMed query with “OSCE AND virtual patient” will give the Authors some terms of reference, but there are many more papers dealing with the comparison between standardized and virtual patients.

2.2 The authors should give some details of the way assessment is currently performed, with a special regard to the way OSCE and virtual patients are used at their University.

2.3 The authors should put their research in the more general theoretical framework of assessment. I suggest a careful consideration of the concept of “assessment for learning” van der Vleuten proposed. iOSCE could be a particular instance of that model, which calls for repeated, multimodal acts of assessment.

2.4 Why do the authors compare iOSCE with SCT, which is a written test? What about mini-CEX instead?
3. Methods

3.1 Please specify the way students were selected. Voluntary basis? Some kind of rewards?

3.2 I have some doubts about the flow of information across the exercise. Student start with the interaction with SP to take history, then are challenged to do a diff diagnosis in the VP system. What about their failing to get some mandatory information from the SP, preventing them to do the right diagnosis? Do the VP system provide the missing information?

4. Discussion

The authors should explain which are the advantages of iOSCE with respect to a set of OSCE stations structured like mini-CEX, one for each competency (HT, DD, request, …) or with a longer simulation with a SP encompassing both the history taking and the reasoning process, observed and assessed through a form

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare no competing interest in relation to this paper