Charting inspiration: Development and evaluation of a tool to measure health professional student learning in the affective domain

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Background: Learning in the affective domain, according to Bloom and Krathwohl’s famous taxonomy, is a critical component of the education of health professionals. It describes learners’ development of an integrated values framework consistent with that of their chosen profession, but has been notoriously difficult to assess and verify.

Summary of Work: Based on phenomenological analysis of the daily journals of participants in a randomised educational trial of an extended multi-method simulation methodology, we developed a simple tool to enable assessors to identify and rate examples of affective learning in reflective journals, according to the levels described by Krathwohl (1973). The Griffith University Affective Learning Scale (GUALS) was trialled in the summative assessment of journals from medical students participating in subsequent iterations of the extended simulation program, which provides intensive realistic experiences of junior doctor life.

Summary of Results: In the pilot study 130 student journals were each rated by two independent assessors (with the higher of the two scores being used for summative purposes during the validation). Scores on the scale were normally distributed and showed good psychometrics, with a mean inter-rater difference of 0.3 points on a 7-point scale and an intra-class correlation coefficient of 0.86. Results from a larger sample of journals will be presented.

Discussion and Conclusions: The tool appears to be sufficiently reliable for summative use.

Take-home messages: The GUALS shows promise as a fair and reliable method for the summative assessment of affective learning in the journals of health professional students experiencing intense clinical experiences in both simulated and real-care settings.