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Published

2012

Conference Title

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Knowledge-based Science of Medicine Exams in Year 1 May be a Good Predictor of Student Performance in Later Years of a Graduate Entry Medical Program

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Introduction / Background

Scores on gross anatomy comprehensive final examinations are correlated with scores on the USMLE Step 1 examination and may be of use in identifying students in need of additional academic support in preparation for this exam¹. There appears to be no published work looking at student performance in other knowledge-based exams throughout a medical program.

¹Peterson,CA and Tucker,RP (2005) Anat Rec 283B:5-8

Methods of Research / Description of Activity

The current study investigates whether performance in knowledge-based Science of Medicine examinations (Doctor and Knowledge of Health and Illness or DKHI theme) in Year 1 could be predictive of student performance within the four year, graduate entry medical program at Griffith University. Assessment data from four cohorts of students (2005 to 2008; n= 494) throughout the MBBS were analysed.

Results of Research / Evaluation of activity / Application

The final DKHI theme scores in Year 1 are significantly correlated ($P < 0.01$) with the scores in this theme for all years of the program (accounting for 40-50% of the medical program) as well as the final Year 4 score (n = 494 students). Analysis of supplementary exams taken by students in DKHI in all years of the medical program suggest that borderline pass and fail students in Year 1 are likely to remain "at risk" and continue to depend on supplementary exams later in the program.

Conclusions / Implications / 'Where to from here?'

Performance in knowledge-based Science of Medicine examinations in Year 1 appears to be a good predictor for student performance in these components throughout a medical program and could be very important in planning early remediation work for "at risk" students.