

Evaluation of self-perceived competencies of intern medical officers in Sri Lanka

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The health care delivery system and the society in a country expect doctors to function with a wide spectrum of competencies. They are expected to achieve these competencies during their undergraduate training. However, as the teaching and assessment in the undergraduate curriculum focuses on knowledge and skills doctors face challenges due to lack of some of the competencies during the internship for first time in their life. Therefore, evaluation of self-perceived competencies among doctors who are planning to work as doctors would be a valuable feedback for medical educators that will highlight important aspects of the curriculum. A 20 item pretested self-reporting questionnaire was administered to a group of 548 doctors from 9 medical faculties in Sri Lanka and doctors graduated from foreign universities at a common meeting held by the Ministry of Health. Responses were analysed according the faculty of graduating and their merit order. More than 50% of doctors from all the medical faculties perceived that their competencies are either above or just meet the expectation of a doctor with regards to knowledge, history taking and examination skills, managing emergencies, non- emergency management of common conditions, procedural skills, written communication skills, solving non-medical problems, communication skills, showing empathy and compassion for patients, showing respect for patients and other health care workers, effective collaboration with the team, interest in non-medical activities, administrative and managerial skills, teaching students, colleagues, and other health workers, research, audit and critical thinking skills, commitment for work, commitment for further learning, acknowledging own limitations and seeks help when appropriate and taking responsibilities according to the role as an intern average. However, competencies with regards to management of emergencies, procedural skills, solving non-medical problems, managerial skills in research, audit, and critical thinking were perceived as low, border line or marginally meet the expectation of a doctor by majority of doctors. Perceptions of doctors from deferent medical faculties revealed unique differences that need specific attention from respective medical faculties. Evaluation of learners' perception highlighted the deficiencies and strengths of the undergraduate curriculum that need attention. However, work place based assessment by the supervising consultant would be a better reflection of competencies of doctors. Repeating the appraisal after a period of working would have been a better indicator, as doctors would have better perception about their competencies by experience. Establishing a system of self-reflection as well as evaluation by supervisors would be helpful to improve competencies of doctors while providing valuable feedback to medical educators.

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