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Sustainment of a weekly OSCE with new staff in an Ambulance Paramedic Training Department

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ABSTRACT

Background: "Orientation" is an important phase when joining a new institution. It is the period when someone builds an understanding of their role/responsibilities in a new setting, and for colleagues to gauge someone's level of knowledge and competence. HMCAS recruits mostly overseas nursing qualified staff with variable experience and transforms them into Ambulance Paramedics (AP) all providing the same level of care in accordance to our Clinical Practice Guidelines.

Methods: Skills assessment using a 17–20 stations Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) process was introduced in the Training Department during a week-long instructor development workshop in 2013. Instructors were coached to develop practical/theoretical OSCE stations and took part in pilot sessions as examiners with new APs. The OSCE is now a core AP training programme component with weekly sessions to assess new staff on what they have been taught up to that point in time.

Results: Over 120 OSCE sessions have occurred in 2 years exposing about 600 staff to a minimum of 3 sessions each. A bank of over 40 stations has been developed and validated, and a team of trained examiners is used. As determined by the course evaluation form, although seen as a stressful experience, instructors and staff find it a very beneficial and effective assessment modality to prepare them for clinical practice. It motivates staff to study and they even request to have an OSCE per year as part of their continuing professional development.

Conclusion: We are committed and have processes in place to sustain the facilitation of OSCE sessions as it is a very practical way of assessing a wide range of skills over a set time period and gauging staff progress through consecutive sessions. The initial preparation is time consuming but we encourage other departments to explore this approach as part of their orientation/training programme.

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