

The Impact of Clinical Competency Test on Dental Students' Clinical Skills Learning and Patient Care

Zamros YM Yusof¹, Hong T. Ching¹, Roslan Saub¹, Maria Angela G Gonzalez², Rashidah Esa¹, Zeti Adura A Aziz²

¹Department of Community Oral Health & Clinical Prevention, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Malaya; zamros@um.edu.my

²Department of Restorative Dentistry, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Malaya

Background: Clinical Competency Test (CCT) has been regarded as the contemporary method to assess dental students' clinical skills in integrated dental curriculum in dental schools worldwide. It is an independent test for students to carry out specific clinical procedures on patients in the clinic. Each year, students are required to undertake CCTs on different clinical procedures based on the levels of clinical skills relevant to that year (Year III-V). As dentistry is a clinical profession, students are required to pass all CCTs in the respective year before they are eligible to sit for final examinations. Otherwise, they will be required to repeat the year. In UM, students sit for five CCTs in Year III, four CCTs in Year IV, and six CCTs in Year V.

Aim: This research aimed to explore the impact of the CCT on students' clinical skills development and patient care from graduates' and lecturers' perspectives with the view for curriculum improvement.

Method: This study used a mixed-method study design with exploratory sequential design strategy including qualitative followed by quantitative data collection. The first phase included Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted on three groups of recent graduates (8 participants per group) based on their Year V examination performance (high, moderate, and low grades) and a group of eight dental academics. They were asked about their opinions on the CCT. Discussions during the FGDs were recorded using an audio-recording tape. Data were transcribed and analysed using Nvivo software version 11 to generate relevant themes. The second phase involved questionnaire development which will be used to obtain quantitative feedback of the CCT from Year III-V dental students. This report only includes graduates' perspectives of the CCT.

Results: Based on the FGDs, the CCT helps students to achieve the required level of clinical competence, promote learning, develop critical thinking, become clinically independence, improve clinical confidence and soft skills, and provide faster and quality treatment. However, weaknesses of the CCT included its inadequacy to assess comprehensive clinical skills, difficulties in finding suitable case and clinical slot allocation, inconsistent assessments by lecturers, compromised patient care, delayed treatment, and lack of holistic patient care. Suggestions for improvement included upgrading assessment standards, provision of suitable patients by faculty, facilitation in clinical slot allocation, standardised assessment by lecturers, improvement in CCT booking system, timing of CCT, establishment of student support system and provision of feedback following CCT.

Conclusion: The use of CCT as an assessment tool to assess dental students' clinical skills has some benefits and weaknesses. Further improvement of CCT by curriculum development committee is essential to make it a holistic assessment tool that promotes students' clinical skills learning and patient care.

This project is supported by RU002M-2016 grant under UM-LiTeR Grant of 2016.