Assessment of musculoskeletal examination skills of 4th year medical students using a novel OSCE

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Background
- Musculoskeletal disorders and diseases are a leading cause of pain, physical disability, and health care expenditure in the United States1
- University of Michigan medical students participate in integrated musculoskeletal sequences during their preclinical years, but there are few opportunities to receive formative or summative assessment of their diagnostic and physical exam skills
- Many M4 students and PGY-1s do not feel confident in their ability to examine and diagnose musculoskeletal disorders (Figure 1)

Methods
- IRB exemption was obtained.
- Three station OSCE (shoulder, back and knee) based on the “Hypothesis-Driven Physical Exam” developed by multidisciplinary group of musculoskeletal specialists
- For each station, volunteer M4 students were provided a clinical vignette with three plausible diagnoses to consider, and were instructed to anticipate physical examination maneuvers or findings that would discriminate between the different diagnoses
- They then examined a professional patient simulating findings associated with only one of the diagnoses, and afterwards were instructed to choose their favored diagnosis based on their exam findings
- Their physical exam was directly observed by a trained faculty member who scored their performance of physical examination maneuvers that would discriminate between the three possible diagnoses for each station (0 = not done, 1 = done with errors, 2 = correctly done). Each encounter was videotaped and independently scored by another faculty member
- Afterward, feedback was provided to students at the end of the OSCE (formative assessment)

Analysis
- Student data was anonymized and demographics compiled
- Inter-rater reliability for each maneuver was estimated using type-2 intra-class correlations (ICC) with .70 used as a benchmark for good reliability, and .80 for excellent reliability.
- Percentages of perfect scores for anticipated (A) and performance (P) of each maneuver were calculated
- Pearson’s correlation between Anticipation and Performance scores was computed for each maneuver

Results
- Inter-rater reliability was good to excellent for scoring 6 exam maneuvers: Disc (ICC = .81), SI (ICC = .85), Impingement (ICC = .69), GH arthritis (ICC = .76), ACL (ICC = .87), OA (ICC = .87). Rater scores were averaged for each student

Conclusions
- A substantial percentage of graduating M4s are not able to perform core examination skills needed to diagnose common disorders of the shoulder, back and knee
- Accurate anticipation of a discriminatory exam maneuver correlates with their ability to perform the maneuver; however, students were more able to anticipate the maneuver than to actually perform it. Thus, direct observation is critical to ensure competence of students in evaluating musculoskeletal disorders
- Physical exam scores based on observation and a structured checklist are reliable between raters

Future Directions
- This data will be used as part of ongoing evaluation of the longitudinal musculoskeletal curriculum at the University of Michigan medical school
- Future assessments of musculoskeletal examination skills can be compared to these data as a benchmark for improvement

Notes and References
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