

Assessment

SERN lead for assessment: Dr Peter Watson



 p.watson@qub.ac.uk

Assessment is at the heart of education as exemplified by the often quoted statement '.....assessment drives learning'

Assessment in medical education is frequent and a matter of considerable debate. Arguably nothing has changed more in medical education in recent years than assessment. There has been a strong movement towards making assessments more objective and standardised with the almost universal adoption of the **OSCE** as the key element. However controversy rages around many aspects of assessment: when, how often, what format, reliability, validity, written/ practical, work-based, summative/formative. Assessment necessarily needs to be tailored to the appropriate level of the learner: undergraduate/ postgraduate and also includes assessment of applicants for selection of prospective medical students. Some assessments, particularly the final exit exam, need to be acceptable to external scrutiny by professional bodies such as the GMC and for postgraduate assessments by the various Royal Colleges.

With this diversity of assessment issues and uncertainties there is considerable opportunity for research to provide a better evidence base. Initially we have concentrated on the data to be obtained from the retrospective psychometric analysis of recent exams: do early results predict future performance? Why are some examiners extreme markers? What are the factors used by examiners in determining a global score? Are longer OSCE's better than short ones? What are the non-cognitive factors that enable or impair OSCE performance? Should work-based assessments only be formative?

We look forward to developing our research in this area. Our continued good standing and public trust as a profession in no small way depends on good assessments. If you are interested in developing an idea for a project or are looking for any further information on current projects relating to the assessment theme please get in touch.

Peter