A Response to Evaluating the Usefulness and Acceptability of a Revision-Purposed “Specialties” Webinar for Educating UK-Based Fifth and Final Year Medical Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic [Letter]

Vyshnavi Thanaraaj
Ahmed Turkman
Imperial College London, Faculty of Medicine, London, UK

Dear editor

We have read the article “Evaluating the Usefulness and Acceptability of a Revision-Purposed ‘Specialties’ Webinar for Educating UK-Based Fifth and Final Year Medical Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Is This the Future of Medical Education?” by Cooper et al.1 The authors provide an interesting insight into the importance of webinars as a valuable method of learning for medical students, revising for speciality examinations. Hence, we want to present our comments on particular aspects of this study.

Cooper et al1 assessed the usefulness of webinars using self-rated knowledge, finding “there was a significant increase in perceived knowledge of the course”. However, Prince et al2 shows self-report of skills and abilities poorly corresponds to objective performance. Therefore, one way to improve the study is to issue a knowledge written exam to assess performance.3 For example, including a diagnostic assessment to establish their starting level and a summative assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the webinar. This method allows the authors to identify precisely what knowledge was gained under investigation. In addition, by self-rating their knowledge, the students may have seemed inclined to increase their scores on the post-webinar questionnaire, probably out of appreciation to the organisers.

The authors of the study used a pre-and post-webinar statement to assess how confident their delegates felt about their specialities examination. From this, Cooper et al1 found that the students felt significantly more confident about their specialities examination following the webinar. Interestingly, Morgan and Cleave-Hogg4 found no correlation between their medical students’ confidence and examination performance. Hence, it seems ineffective to assess perceived confidence as this does not appear to correlate to exam performance. Similarly, Valdez et al5 reported that perceived confidence did not correspond with exam performance but also showed that students’ knowledge retention decreased by ~10% over four months. Therefore, we believe a better educational strategy would have been to assess the long-term impact of the webinar. This

Correspondence: Vyshnavi Thanaraaj
Imperial College London, Faculty of Medicine, London, UK
Email vyshnavi.thanaraaj16@imperial.ac.uk

© 2021 Thanaraaj and Turkman. This work is published and licensed by Dove Medical Press Limited. The full terms of this license are available at https://www.dovepress.com/terms.php and incorporate the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial (unported, v3.0) License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/). By accessing the work you hereby accept the Terms. Non-commercial uses of the work are permitted without any further permission from Dove Medical Press Limited, provided the work is properly attributed. For permission for commercial use of this work, please see paragraphs 4.2 and 5 of our Terms (https://www.dovepress.com/terms.php).
can be done by presenting a similar webinar and measuring confidence levels and knowledge levels several months later. In conclusion, the authors highlighted the significance of utilising webinar-based revision and self-reported analysis to enhance healthcare education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Remarkably, the importance of the students’ self-reflection on their confidence and knowledge regarding specialities examination to determine the effectiveness of the webinar to aid learning. However, as previously discussed, we believe more emphasis should be placed on including objective assessments to evaluate knowledge reliably and to assess long-term impact.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

References

1. Cooper N, Sharma A, Cooper J, Al-Asady Y, Khajuria A. Evaluating the usefulness and acceptability of a revision-purposed ‘specialties’ webinar for educating UK-based fifth and final year medical students during the COVID-19 pandemic: is this the future of medical education? Adv Med Educ Pract. 2021;12:979–985. doi:10.2147/AMEP.S321533
2. Prince SA, Adamo KB, Hamel ME, Hardt J, Gorber SC, Tremblay M. A comparison of direct versus self-report measures for assessing physical activity in adults: a systematic review. Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act. 2008;5(1):1–24. doi:10.1186/1479-5868-5-56
3. Pro KH, Pro EL, Pro JR, et al. Are standardized knowledge assessment exams the best way to assess a pharmacist’s competence and should they be a mandatory component of licence renewal? Can J Hosp Pharm. 2014;67(4):304.PMC articles PMC4152971.
4. Morgan PJ, Cleave-Hogg D. Comparison between medical students’ experience, confidence and competence. Med Educ. 2002;36(6):534–539. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2923.2002.01228.X
5. Valdez CA, Thompson D, Ulrich H, Bi H, Paulsen S. A comparison of pharmacy students’ confidence and test performance. Am J Pharm Educ. 2006;70(4):76. doi:10.5688/AJ700476