

Supervisors' brief guide to getting their registrar through the clinical exams (by Simon Hatcher)

The aim of the exam is to assess the trainees ability to prioritise - in other words to know what is important in clinical encounters.

For example the main issues may be: 'management of acute symptoms', 'preventing recurrence', 'improving functioning', 'managing risk' or, less commonly, 'what's the diagnosis'.

The observed interview is not a test of interrogation skills

Structure of the clinical exam

OCI 50 minute interview, 20 minutes thinking time, up to 30 minutes viva with two examiners. First 7 minutes presenting the case – again the time limit is there to make candidates prioritise.

OSCE - tests ability to do registrar tasks. Aims to examine things that can't be examined elsewhere.

Developmental aspects of clinical skills

Medical student – takes a history and then repeats it back to you without much filtering.

First/second year registrars – takes a history and fills in a proforma – history of presenting complaint, psychiatric history etc. Emphasis on diagnosis, some interpretation.

Ready to proceed to advanced training – takes a history and begins to recognize what is important for the patient. Less emphasis on diagnosis.

Building exam practice into daily work

Presenting patients in 7 minutes at ward rounds, phone calls, supervision. Should start with 'this case illustrates the problems of' or 'the main issues in this case are' etc. Then history, what else you need to know, mental state examination, formulation, diagnosis which is consistent with the opening statement of issues. Record and play back for later supervision and feedback (e.g. audio recording). Consultants should model such presentations for trainees.

Plus - get them to write presentations and action plans - most people can present at 150 words per minute so a 7 minute presentation is about 1000 words. Especially important where there are English as a second language issues. Helps clarify assumptions, useful aid for supervision.

Get them to present the action (management) plan in the same way - prioritise, structure, make it clear that this is consistent with the overall issues. About 5-6 min for this part so ~700-800 words.

Observing interviews - full 50 min. Feedback - CORBS: **C**lear, **O**wned, **R**egular, **B**alanced, **S**pecific. NB: Focus on their behaviours.

Cognitive testing - KISS, do it right, know what each bit's for and meaning, not just autopilot MMSE
Phenomenology - clarity, know how to elicit/test, meaning and implications

Registrars should also be observed and observe their Consultants doing real-life OSCE tasks as well as 17 minute OSCE practices. e.g.- family meeting, de-escalating a situation, negotiating with key worker, liaising with a referrer, etc. Can also do College OSCEs with trainee pairs (one as actor, one as candidate) - trainees can print off many past OSCE scripts - all stored on exams part of website.