

Practical Guide to Medical Student Assessment

Zubair Amin, MD, MHPE, Chong Yap Seng, MD, and Khoo Hoon Eng, PhD

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Reviewed by

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The purpose of the Practical Guide to Medical Student Assessment by Zubair Amin, MD, MHPE, Chong Yap Seng, MD, and Khoo Hoon Eng, PhD, is "to provide a simple, practical reference to commonly raised questions about assessment instruments." (p xiii) It was not intended to be an all-inclusive text on assessment, but rather an introduction to the types of instruments currently in use in undergraduate medical education.

The book has 21 very short chapters, sometimes just two pages, divided into four sections. It begins with a section on the principles and purpose of assessment in medical education. Terminology, such as reliability and validity, is briefly introduced and defined in chapters two to four, and the model which provides the framework for the book is described in chapter 5.

The rest of the book is divided into four sections according to "assessment levels" as proposed by George Miller in 1990¹; know, knows how, shows and does. Each chapter briefly discusses assessment techniques thought to represent a given level with limitations, recommendations and rationale for the use of the method. The authors conclude the book with an appendix containing recommendations for better assessment practice and a schema for better practice in undergraduate medical education. An annotated bibliography is provided for further reading.

This book packs a big punch for its size. It not only provides brief descriptions of a multitude of assessment techniques currently in use in medical education but also provides samples of questions or checklists where appropriate. The authors state in a disclaimer at the beginning of the book that it is not meant to be an exhaustive reference, and, indeed, it is not. But each chapter ends with a list of sources of additional information for those who are interested.

My only criticism of the book is that because of its brevity, many of the recommendations appear hard and

fast without space for discussing the nuances of measurement such as acceptable reliability or validity in a specific situation that temper our decision making in assessing the usability of a given tool. Therefore, while this book would be an excellent introduction for those unfamiliar with the ways to assess medical students, I would recommend that it be used as just that, encouraging those who read it to go on to learn more from the many excellent references provided.

Note: Dr. Amin is a Review Editor for Medical Education Online. Dr. Ferrell has no direct affiliation with the Journal. The editorial staff of the journal did not make any changes to Dr. Ferrell's review other than to format the manuscript to be consistent with the Book Review Section of the Journal.

¹Miller, G.E. The assessment of clinical skills/competence/ performance. Acad. Med. 1990;65(9):S63-S67.