

Impact of a Communication Skills training course on performance in high stakes Membership Communication OSCE Station

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Congratulations on your beautiful baby. I am sorry to have to tell you she has Down's Syndrome...

"Congratulations"?!?



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The BIG Question

Do paediatric trainees taking their clinical Membership examination do better in the Communications Stations after attending a communication skills training course?

What we did...

Two College examiners, a senior paediatric trainee with an interest in education and a Communications Consultant designed a one-day communication skills training course for MRCPCH. Two role players were trained in 6 novel scenarios.

Statistical analysis

Anonymised data on attendees was obtained from RCPCH. Comparisons of candidate performance were made before and after course attendance. Statistical analysis suggested a significant difference in scores before and after the course ($F=1.65$, $p=0.03$).

What we found...

The course has been held on 5 occasions, attended by 47 trainees. 44 (94%) went on to attempt the MRCPCH exam. In total 29 (66%) of candidates attending the course passed the exam at the next or at a subsequent sitting. The national average pass rate for the exam over the same period was 50%.

There were 45 candidate-attempts before the course and 60 after. In the 2 communications stations, the mode score increased across attempts from 4 (clear fail) and 8 (bare fail) pre course, to 12 (clear pass) in both communication stations post course ($t(9) = -4.04$, $p = 0.000114$). See Table 1 below.



Ashley Reece describes common pitfalls in communication scenarios...

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...James Hutchinson explains how to overcome the common pitfalls



Table 1. Scores in Communication Stations

	Before course		After course	
	A	B	A	B
Communication Station (A or B)	A	B	A	B
Number of candidate-attempts	45	45	60	60
Most frequent score	4	8	12	12
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.90	0.79	0.69	0.55

Our Take Home Message

This course led to:

- More passes in the communications stations
- A higher pass rate in the exam overall

We hope the improved communication skills acquired for the exam by attending this course will extend to the workplace.