



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]

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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

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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.

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