

## Validity of Oral Assessment

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**A**ssessment (evaluation) of students is an integral component of any educational process and it is necessary to improve the performance. With the quick advances in medical education, several strategies of teaching and learning are also revised.<sup>1</sup> Oral assessment (viva-voce) has been used as a mode of assessment for many years in institutions all over the world. It is an essential component of assessment in several undergraduate and postgraduate examinations in medicine. It refers to any assessment of student learning that is conducted, wholly or in part, by spoken word instead of writing.<sup>2</sup> It gives the examiner the opportunity to explore students' depth of knowledge and their ability to express it in a precise manner.<sup>3</sup> It may involve an assessor or assessors posing questions orally, with varying degrees of spoken interaction as the assessment proceeds. But several educationists in their studies have criticized traditional oral assessments for containing poor validity and reliability.<sup>4,5</sup> Validity of an assessment is the degree to which it measures what it is supposed to measure. Variability of the examination is high when questions are not structured. They suggested, structuring of viva will solve all the issues related to the low reliability and validity.<sup>6</sup> The duration of the oral assessments too vary ranging from a few minutes to hours. Assessment is valid when it allows student to fully demonstrate their knowledge, skills and implications in relation to the course they are studying. The concept of validity reveals a number of aspects of oral assessments, each of

which deserves attention and it is related to the content and construction of a test. So, it is most commonly referred to types of validity i.e., face validity, content validity, concurrent validity, predictive validity and construct validity.<sup>7</sup> The validity of oral examinations can be increased by the use of structured, standardized orals and by training of examiners.<sup>8</sup>

Designing of assessment is a complex task. We have to keep in mind the level of students, as well as administrative and logistic issues. Furthermore, the discipline to be assessed has its own specifications and we cannot apply one assessment method to all disciplines.<sup>9</sup>

Thereby, structured viva can be more helpful in discriminating good from average performers as per the qualified faculty member's judgment. Introducing structured viva examination can effectively help the examinee to overcome their exam stress and achieve better results. Moreover, structured viva has better face validity as compared to unstructured viva. So, viva examination with good validity emerged as a better assessment tool from both the examiner and student's point of view.

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