

To v or not to v ? Moving from In-person to Virtual Examination of Clinical Performance for PA Learners

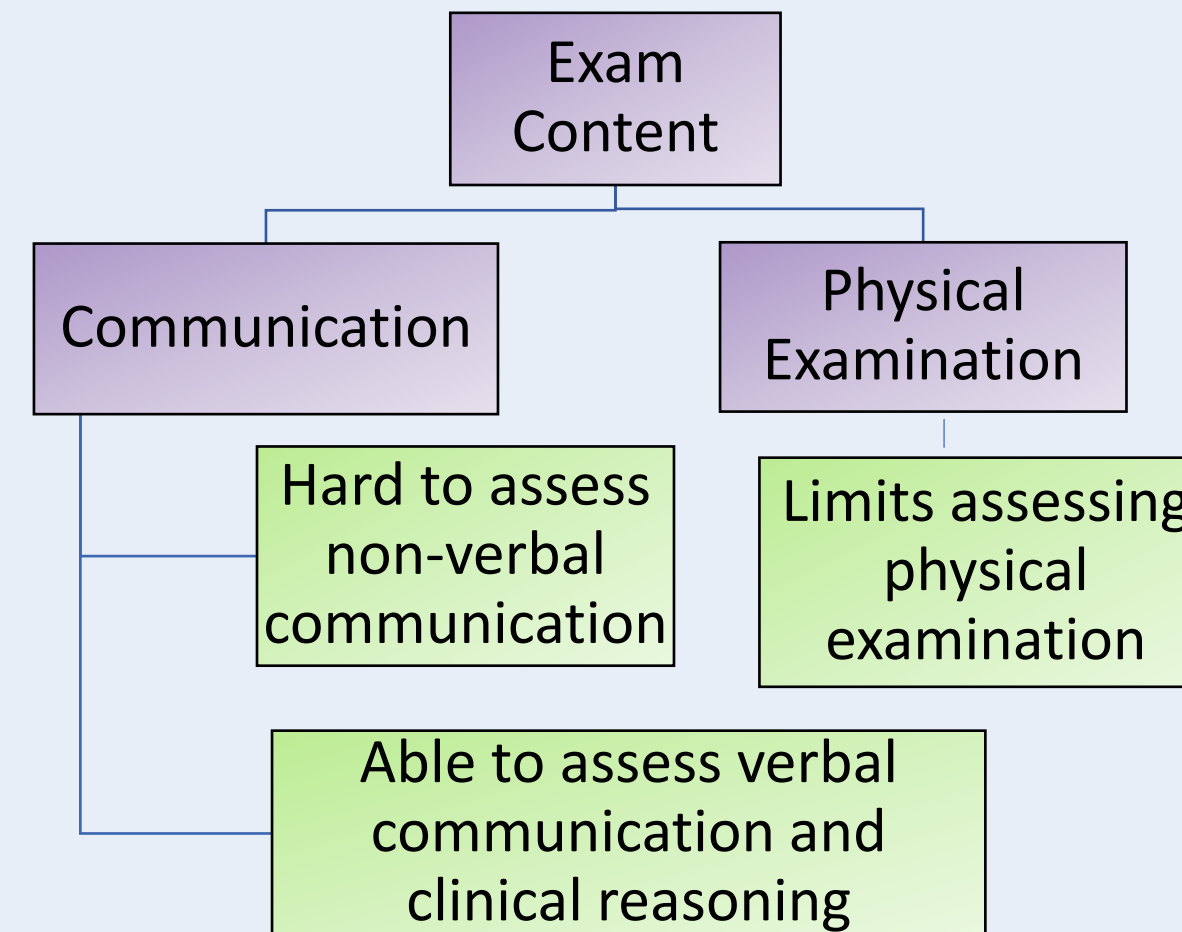
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Background: The pandemic has prompted a pivot to virtual modes of assessment. One example is the virtual Objective Standardized Clinical Examination (vOSCE). In our program we replaced the usual OSCE with a vOSCE. The literature suggests the vOSCE is feasible and acceptable. We sought to investigate perceptions within our context.

Methods: 26 senior PA learners took the vOSCE in 2020. Each of twelve 10-minute virtual scenarios were video recorded and later rated by faculty using a scoring sheet. Students and raters completed a survey exploring perceptions. Questions were open-ended and related to advantages, disadvantages, fairness, and fidelity. Responses were analyzed and coded with Nvivo software.

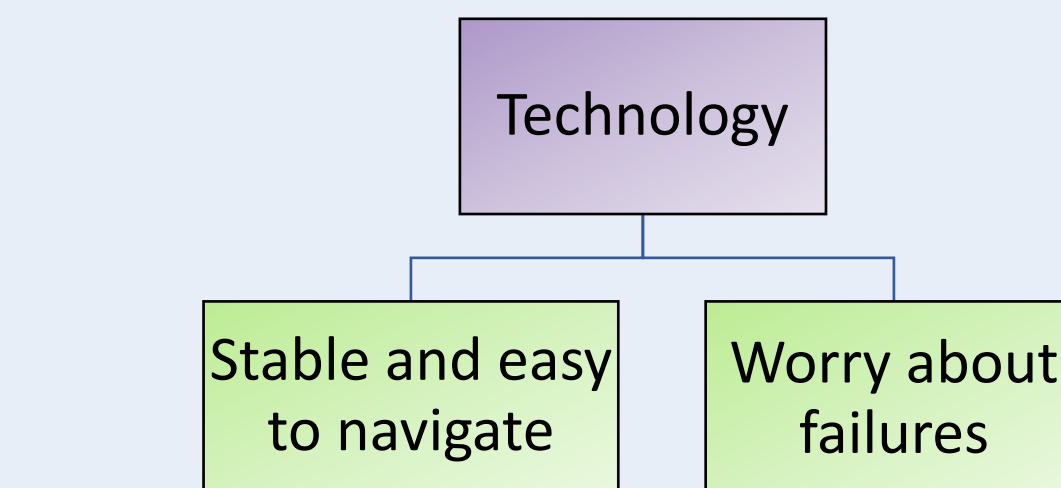
Results: Respondents agreed the exam was fair and could assess communication and clinical reasoning. A serious limitation was assessing physical examination skills. The stations were considered realistic, anticipating an expansion in virtual healthcare. The format was convenient and smooth, although there were concerns of potential technological issues.

Discussion: Our results are consistent with the existing literature describing advantages and limitations of the vOSCE format. Questions remain about the validity and power of the vOSCE compared to the OSCE. The virtual format can be a valuable component of performance assessment with deliberate attention to program assessment mapping.



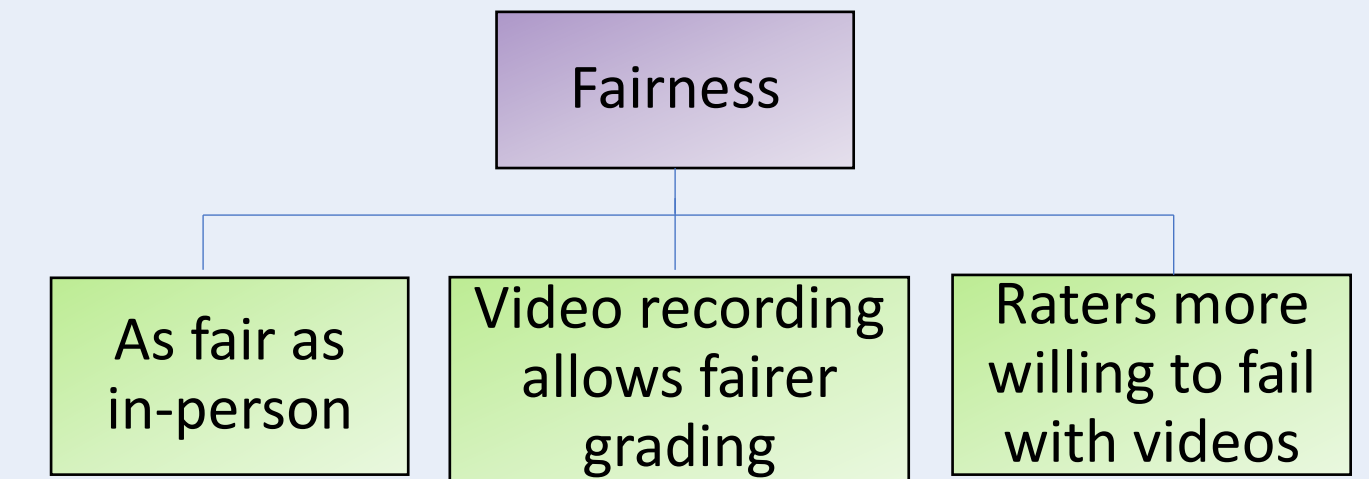
"Challenging to assess communication because of the inability to see body language..."

"good representation for history taking... poor representation for physical exam."



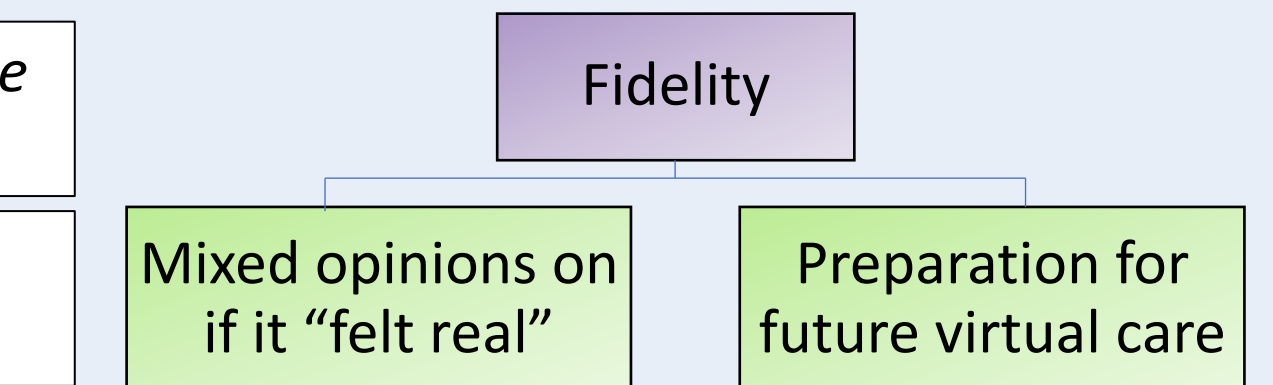
"...worked very well ...without any technical glitches."

"It does introduce the possibility of technical difficulties ... an added stress..."

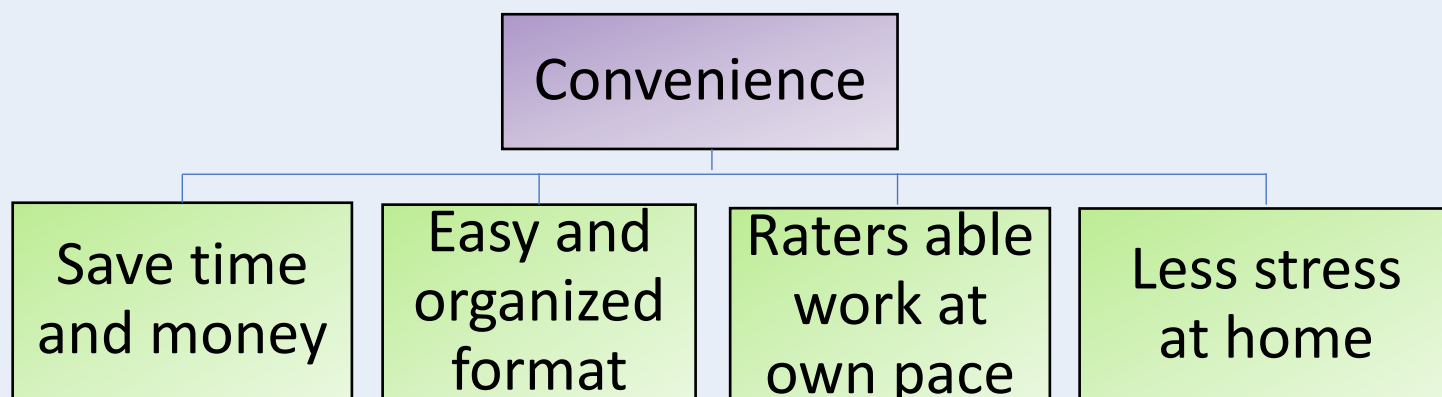


"allowed me to be more standardized and objective."

"I failed more students in this format...they will not know I'm the one who failed them. I also was able to give more feedback."



"Another advantage is the ability to simulate virtual health encounters, which will be increasingly the norm."



"The format was rather easy to maneuver..."

"I appreciated that I could take the exam from the comfort of my home... alleviated a great deal of exam stress and anxiety for me personally."

References

