

Dr. Richard Katz Discusses How NBME Clinical Skills Testing Pivoted During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, August 16, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dr. Richard Katz recently discussed the effects of Covid-19 on NBME clinical skills testing, medical school assessments and lessons learned. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted businesses and industries worldwide, including academia and the related areas of NBME Clinical skills testing and medical school assessments. As Dr. Katz remarked, "The Covid-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to medical education and assessment, requiring adaptations and innovations to ensure the continuity of learning and evaluation." He proceeded to highlight five key points regarding the effects of Covid-19 on NBME testing and medical school assessments.



Richard Katz, MD, MHA is a pharmaceutical executive with extensive experience

1. Shift to Virtual Assessment Formats. Dr. Katz explained: "The pandemic necessitated a rapid shift from traditional in-person assessments to virtual formats. Medical schools adopted methods like open-book exams to eliminate concerns about honor code breaches. Students took previously validated clinical skills exams (CSE) in open-book formats, ensuring fairness and adjusting for historic norms. The National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) implemented virtual proctoring for shelf exams, allowing students to take exams remotely while maintaining academic integrity."

2. Comparative Analysis during the Pandemic: The effects of the pandemic were studied by

comparing cohorts of students who underwent clerkships during the pandemic with those from previous years. Results demonstrated that the Covid-affected group exhibited higher scores in CSE, NBME exams, and performance evaluations compared to historical averages. This unexpected outcome prompts discussions about the impact of pandemic-related changes on student performance and the effectiveness of virtual assessment methods. Dr. Katz added: "There was also some anecdotal evidence to consider regarding student feedback, as some students expressed concerns about an open-book format affecting their preparation for NBME exams, specifically that it discouraged them from thinking rather than searching online during the test and doubting their answers."

3. Adaptive Changes in Licensure Exams: The pandemic forced major changes in medical licensure exams. Step 1 of the US Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) and COMLEX-USA Level 1 Performance Exam transitioned from scoring to pass/fail systems. Additionally, the passing minimum for USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) was increased. Traditional exams that required physical presence, like USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) and COMLEX-USA Level 2 Performance Exam, were suspended due to logistical challenges. Organizations like NBME and NBOME worked to develop alternative assessments to ensure fair licensing procedures. Dr. Katz elaborated: "Some of the delays and suspensions of testing were unavoidable, and that time can never be gotten back. There were, however, many organizations such as NBME that were able to quickly adapt and find suitable provisions during this unprecedented time. As mentioned previously, many assumed that the switch to these adapted methods would negatively affect test scores, but various results showed otherwise."

4. Innovations in Clinical Skills Assessment: As an alternative to the discontinued Step 2 CS exam, organizations like NBME and NBOME collaborated with medical schools to develop innovative assessment methods. These new exams focus on clinical reasoning, communication skills, and patient care. They involve virtual prompts and electronic health record evaluations. The introduction of these exams aims to ensure that students' clinical skills are adequately evaluated while adapting to the realities of the pandemic and beyond. Dr. Katz expanded on this idea, adding: "The new assessment methods introduced are more than just a response to the pandemic. They are clinical skill evaluations that not only adapt to the current situation but also enhance the assessment landscape in the long run. These enhancements are a step forward in ensuring medical professionals are well-rounded."

5. Equity, Access, and Validity Concerns: While virtual assessments addressed concerns related to travel and lodging, some challenges persisted. Students raised concerns about the validity of the new assessment methods. Calls were made for transparency in evidence collection to validate the effectiveness of these new exams. Additionally, discussions about ensuring equity and access for all students, including international medical graduates, were vital components of the assessment changes prompted by the pandemic.

Dr. Richard Katz then summarized his discussion: "The Covid-19 pandemic precipitated significant changes in NBME testing and medical school assessments. Virtual assessment

formats were adopted, resulting in unexpected outcomes during the pandemic. Licensure exams underwent transformative changes, and institutions worked to develop innovative assessment methods that focus on critical clinical skills. While challenges surrounding equity, access, and validity persisted, these changes presented an opportunity for the medical education sector to innovate, learn and evolve. The ongoing discussions and adaptations underscore the importance of maintaining rigorous assessment practices while navigating the uncertainties of a rapidly changing landscape.”

For similar studies and discussions, read “Medical Student Assessment in the Time of COVID-19” and “Thanks to COVID, Clinical Skills Testing Will Never Be the Same.”

About Dr. Richard Katz

Richard Katz, MD, MHA has extensive experience in central nervous system, regenerative - biological cell-based therapies, clinical trial design and operations. Dr. Katz has consulted across many therapeutic areas in the pharmaceutical and life science industries. Similar to the mission and values of NBME, he works to improve the medical community and health care around the world. His focus is on delivering more effective, affordable, treatments to improve patient health outcomes making a global impact on healthcare than what is possible by treating one patient at a time. Dr. Katz enjoys collaborating on breakthrough technologies in the medical device and pharmaceutical industries as well as on topics of medical education and NBME assessments.

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