Background

Competency-based curriculum has become widely accepted in health professional education as a way to define the knowledge, skill and attitudinal outcomes expected of the pre-licensure learner. Experts in the field of competency-based education define “competency” as an integrated set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgments that enable one to effectively perform the activities of a given occupation or function to the standards expected in employment (Tardif, 2006). Since competency-based evaluation involves making subjective judgment about the quality of performance and development of a set of competencies, much attention is being paid to the development of appropriate evaluation strategies. Two evaluation tools of interest in the field of competency-based assessment in healthcare are the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) and the assessment rubric. The OSCE is a well established summative assessment strategy used in many health care education curricula, found to be valid and reliable for assessing clinical competence (Khattab & Rawlings, 2001). Scoring guidelines or “rubrics” are being used to provide more authentic, competency-based assessments relying on performance indicators that are precisely defined (Popham, 2000).

The move towards competency-based interprofessional education (IPE) is clearly underway. However, according to Oandasan and Reeves (2005), there is a dearth in the literature pertaining to how to assess competencies related to the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for collaborative practice. While many assessments have been conducted that measure attitudinal shifts, a greater emphasis is needed to develop precise ways to measure all competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours) for IPE.

Correspondence: Vernon Curran, Centre for Collaborative Health Professional Education, Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University, St John’s, Newfoundland, A1B 3V6, Canada. E-mail: vcurran@mun.ca

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At the University of Nottingham an evaluation of an Interprofessional Team Objective Structured Clinical Examination (ITOSCE) has been undertaken to evaluate interprofessional competencies (Symonds et al., 2003). There were no other studies in the literature specifically describing the use of ITOSCEs for the purpose of competency-based evaluation. Given the current emphasis on IPE in Canada, this apparent gap in the research literature supports the need for the development of effective methods to measure interprofessional competencies. It is critical that these assessment tools be developed to clearly demonstrate the achievement of milestones or levels in competency development.

Goals

The goals of the research project to be conducted are threefold: (1) to develop a validated list of interprofessional collaborative competencies with associated performance criteria and behavioural indicators; (2) to develop an Assessment Rubric for use in the assessment of collaborative competencies; (3) to assess the feasibility, reliability and validity of the Assessment Rubric for evaluating interprofessional collaborative competencies within the context of an ITOSCE.

Research design and methods

This study will be conducted through a partnership across three provinces in Canada.

Stage 1: Competency development

This stage of the project will include a detailed and expanded assessment of the peer-reviewed and grey literature pertaining to interprofessional collaborative competencies conducted in both English and French.

A comparative analysis of this literature will be undertaken by the researchers who will then create a listing of statements and associated performance criteria/behavioural indicators that correspond to salient features of each competency. Finally, a Delphi survey of a pan-Canadian interprofessional group of experts will be undertaken (Khattab & Rawlings, 2001). The Delphi survey will ask informed experts to rate the validity of the competency statements and associated performance criteria/behavioural indicators.

Stage 2: Assessment Rubric development

An Assessment Rubric will be constructed. Rubrics are generally composed of dimensions for judging learner performance, a scale for rating performances on each dimension, and standards of excellence for specified performance levels. Rubrics have been recommended in the literature as being more valid than behavioural checklists when conducting OSCEs (See Table I) (Hodges et al., 1999).

Key principles used to develop the rubric will include: (1) identifying the type and purpose of the rubric by considering what is to be assessed; (2) identifying distinct criteria to be evaluated; (3) determining levels of assessment – identifying range and scoring scales; (4) for each criteria, differentiating clearly between the levels of expectation; (5) involving learners in development and effective use of the rubric; (6) pre-testing the rubric. Focus groups with students and faculty will be conducted to review the assessment rubric developed and provide feedback on utility, clarity, practicality and fairness.
Stage 3: Evaluation of the Assessment Rubric

An ITOSCE with standardized, multiple stations will be developed, organized and tested across partner sites. Two examiners will be recruited and assigned per station and the investigators will aim to recruit three groups of four to six students representing at least four different professions for a total of 12 to 18 students per site. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with examiners at all sites to evaluate user satisfaction with the rubric. These interviews will be analyzed and students will be asked to complete a survey to rate their satisfaction with the ITOSCE as a learning and assessment experience.

The reliability of the Assessment Rubric will be examined by analyzing the scoring results by a volunteer group of educators who will view and rate a videotaped version of the ITOSCE scenario. Evaluation will include an assessment of internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha), interrater reliability, as well as user satisfaction with the rubric.

Expected outcomes

It is expected that the research conducted will provide a pan-Canadian validated list of interprofessional competencies with associated performance criteria and behavioural indicators. Furthermore, this study aims to develop an assessment strategy for competency-based evaluation by testing the validity and reliability of two evaluation tools in both English and French: The Interprofessional Collaborative Competency Assessment Rubric and the ITOSCE. The outcomes will meet the desired need to construct and outline a set of interprofessional collaborative competencies that are applicable to and validated by all health care professions. This research will enable the development and evaluation of valid and reliable assessment tools that will measure interprofessional collaborative competencies in a variety of learning situations. Based on the literature to date, the tools developed will be able to address an urgent need amongst educators advancing the field of IPE.

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References


