

Can Selection Assessments Predict Student's Achievements in the Premedical Year?

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Abstract

Background: In a problem-based learning (PBL) programme, students are encouraged to develop self-motivation, self-confidence, communication skills and problem-solving skills. Measuring these attributes when selecting students into medical schools is a formidable task. Admission to medical schools typically depends upon students' academic achievement in prior education. In the past three years, the College of Medicine and Medical Science (CMMS) at the Arabian Gulf University (AGU), which has a PBL curriculum, adopted an admission policy that utilizes final high school scores, a written admission examination in english and science and a structured interview.

Objective: To determine the extent to which the admission factors predict academic achievement in the first year of studies at CMMS.

Design: Prediction study of prospectively collected data. Final cumulative score for all subjects at the end of the first year was the main dependent variable analyzed.

Subjects: All students admitted to the College during the academic year 1998-1999.

Results: The written admission science examination scores had the highest correlation ($r = 0.663$, $P < 0.05$) with the Year one final cumulative score. Although the admission interview focused on non-cognitive student attributes, which may or may not affect the students' academic performance, its score had a statistically significant, if low correlation with the year one final cumulative score ($r = 0.275$, $P < 0.012$). Approximately 59% of the total variability of the year one final cumulative scores

could be explained by the admission examination scores in science and english and the high school scores.

Conclusion: Procedures for selecting students who are most likely to succeed academically in the initial year at an innovative medical school deserve further study and probably should include both academic performance and non-academic attribute.