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Dental students' perceptions of narrative medicine for facilitating their performances in objective structured clinical examination standardized patient station



The objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), a multi-station clinical skill examination, has been widely used in dental assessment for ensuring standardization and psychometric stability in clinical competency and communication.¹ This validated structured and practical evaluation was also implemented in dental curriculum as the part of core clinical competencies assessment in Taiwan. Structured communication between dentists and patients is recognized as an important part to achieve shared decision-making.² However, dental students may not have the experience or engage with patients before their final years as internship. Therefore, professionally trained standardized patients (SPs) were included to delivery patient portrayal in OSCE dentist-patient communication station. SPs were assigned to comprehensively and accurately express the medical history whether dental students could perform the standardized receptions.

Patient-dentist discourse has been identified as the one of core clinical competencies for dental education in Taiwan.³ Narrative medicine is based on a model of empathy, reflection, professionalism, and trust to facilitate structured communication between patients and dentists leading to holistic medical care.⁴ Narrative medicine was implemented in School of Dentistry, Chung Shan Medical University (CSMU) since 2019. However, the implementation of narrative medicine which could facilitate dental students' performance in OSCE SP station has not been investigated.

A cross-sectional online survey was designed for CSMU year 107 dental students who will enter their final year program as their internships in this coming June, 2023. Total 80 students were invited to fill out their perceptions that narrative medicine could improve their performances in OSCE SP station. Six core competencies defined by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) were selected to measure students' anonymized replies from website by Likert scale. The response rate of this survey was 37.5% (30/80). As shown in [Table 1](#), about 86.7%, 80%, 86.7%, 96.7%, 90%, and 90% of dental students agreed that narrative medicine could improve their performances in OSCE SP station regarding patient care, medical knowledge, practice based learning and improvement, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, and systems based practice, respectively.

Professionally trained SPs can accurately imitate a simulated and realistic clinical setting of the corresponding cases. It is the reason why the authors chose ACGME core competencies for evaluation the outcome of OSCE dentist-patient communication station. From the preliminary results of this survey, narrative medicine was found to improve the communication with SP by the dental students' perceptions. Consistently, narrative medicine was reported to be a good tool to improve oral hygiene instruction for periodontitis patients by interns' perceptions.⁵ In addition, dental students will feel more confident in their ability to communicate and interact with the patients in the further careers.

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Table 1 The results of Likert scale for dental students' perceptions of narrative medicine for facilitating the performance in objective structured clinical examination standardized patient station.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Patient care	11 (36.7%)	15 (50%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)
Medical knowledge	10 (33.3%)	14 (46.7%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)
Practice based learning and improvement	11 (36.7%)	15 (50%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)
Interpersonal and communication skills	15 (50%)	14 (46.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)
Professionalism	12 (40%)	15 (50%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	0 (0%)
Systems based practice	11 (36.7%)	16 (53.3%)	2 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)

In conclusion, we have presented the evidences to suggest that narrative medicine is effective to facilitate the performance of dental students' communication skill in OSCE SP station. However, relatively large size, multi-schools, and longitudinal design are required to improve the generalizability.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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