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Checking the Toolbox for Contemporary Competencies

Abstract:

The skills required for safe and competent practice in the 21st century are different. We will soon be a quarter of the way through this century, and every medical educator has to consider whether they are preparing their students for the career that lies ahead or the one that is past.

More than ever, clinical reasoning must incorporate multiple data inputs and so medical graduates need skills in information management rather than just knowledge recall. Safe, prudent medical practice requires clinicians to access and appraise a broad range of information sources, many of which are also available to patients. And yet we continue to assess students on what they can remember during exams, rather than what they can find out in the authentic clinical setting. A new approach to clinical assessment is required.

Clinical competencies for the current century must include the ability of graduates to find, appraise and incorporate multiple sources of data into their clinical reasoning. This must be done in a way that recognises the legitimacy of authoritative sources while discounting others. And, importantly, the competent medical graduate must be prepared to reveal the workings of their clinical reasoning and the components that have contributed to it.