Time to Develop Entrustable Professional Activities for the Saudi-Med Competency Framework

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**Recommended Citation**  
DOI: 10.1016/j.hpe.2018.04.003  
Available at: [https://hpe.researchcommons.org/journal/vol4/iss3/1](https://hpe.researchcommons.org/journal/vol4/iss3/1)

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Saudi-Med Competency Framework

The fundamental pillar of a safe and efficient healthcare system is the competence of the healthcare providers. Judging whether a provider is competent is usually decided about by medical licensing boards. The dire need of competent practitioners has led to pushing the boundaries of mere licensing, and has led to the development of an approach that ensures the proficiency of a medical graduate, culminating into the conception of competency-based medical education (CBME). CBME is an approach to preparing physicians for practice who possess the desired knowledge, skills, and attitude outlined by the careful consideration of societal and patient needs. CBME has gained immense popularity and is broadly implemented in the health sciences during the past couple of decades. Gradually, many undergraduate as well as postgraduate training programs are shifting their curriculum to align with so-called "competency frameworks." The most well-known among these are the Canadian CanMEDS framework, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education proposal, the Scottish Doctor learning outcomes, and the Dutch national framework.

Recently, in response to the national vision titled "the Saudi Future Doctor", a competency framework namely Saudi MEDS has been developed for Saudi medical graduates. The idea behind developing this generic competency framework was to formulate minimum competency standards that any medical graduate has to meet. The collaborative team, consisting of representatives from five major Saudi health sciences universities, chalked out the competencies framework that reflect the principles of medical practice in Saudi Arabia.

More recently, the introduction of entrustable professional activities (EPAs) has caused a revolution in competency-based medical education because of their sudden, and widespread acceptance. EPAs are units of professional practice that can be fully entrusted to a trainee, as soon as he or she has demonstrated to be able to execute an activity unsupervised. EPAs can be considered a means to operationalise competency-based medical education. It serves as a valuable tool in ensuring the readiness and proficiency of a trainee through an entrustment decision. An EPA is a discrete clinical activity that requires the integration of multiple competencies which are deemed relevant and compulsory to perform a particular task. It is imperative to mention that EPAs differ from competencies as former are the means to translate the latter. That is, competencies are descriptors of an individual person whereas EPAs are descriptors of the task or work that can be observed and entrusted in a clinical workplace. For example, to be proficient in an EPA of performing general medical procedures (appendicectomy), the desired set of competencies are; medical knowledge, communication skills, professionalism, evidence-based practice, and managerial/leadership skills. The evaluation of these competencies will determine the level of overall entrustment and supervision that s/he will be needing to perform appendicectomy.

EPAs are now utilized in many health professions curricula where they form the basis of designing training programs and evaluation protocols aimed at entrusting the trainee. With the growing acceptability and practicality of EPAs, we feel the need to take the Saudi MEDS competency framework a step further. We suggest that it is about time that a comprehensive framework of EPAs should be designed that encompasses all essential competencies of a Saudi medical professional.
graduate and inevitably ensures the proficiency of such healthcare provider.

**Ethical approval**

The submitted manuscript is 'letter to the editor' and does not require ethical approval from the institution for publication.

**Funding**

None.

**Other disclosures**

None.

**References**


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