

Is the porridge fed safely? Applying Miller's Pyramid Model in workplace-based assessment of healthcare assistants (HCAs) in performing supervised feeding for patients with dysphagia

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Abstract

Background

Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) are a group of support care staff who attend to patients' activities of daily living (SkillsFuture, 2023). Many were employed and placed on workplace apprenticeship model, where trainees were assessed using traditional checklists. As there is a growing need for feeding supervision for patients with dysphagia (Poon, Ward & Burns, 2023), this project aims to upskill the competence of HCAs in performing supervised feeding through a blended assessment design, referencing Miller's pyramid of assessment.

Summary of Work

Miller's pyramid model consists of four hierarchical levels, representing the progressive stages of a healthcare provider's clinical competence development (Ramani & Leinster, 2008). The team designed a four-tiered assessment strategy, which include knowledge-based multiple-choice e-quiz, simulated scenario applications, standardised patients exercises and direct observation in clinical areas. Over a period of four months in 2022, nurse educators and speech therapists administered the classroom-based simulated assessments, while nursing clinical champions assessed the HCAs' observable behaviours in the clinical settings. A subsequent online survey was conducted three months later through convenience sampling to evaluate the efficacy of the implemented strategies.

Results

The survey gathered responses from 55 HCAs (37%), 55 clinical champions (46%) and 61 nurses across different inpatient areas. The results revealed that all nurses and clinical champions agreed that the tiered assessment methodologies effectively empowered and prepared HCAs for the competency. Additionally, 54 of HCAs (98%) expressed confidence in performing the supervised feeding skill.

Conclusion

The incorporation of Miller's pyramid in the tiered assessment design is beneficial for workplace-based assessment, addressing both cognitive and behavioural aspects of clinical competence. This approach instils confidence in skill performance of support care staff. Future

research could explore the integration of technology to enhance accessibility in training and assessment, considering the resource and manpower constraints associated with traditional face-to-face classroom simulated assessment.

References (maximum three)

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