

Assessment of prescribing in health (the ASPRINH Project): how should we ensure health professionals are prescribe-ready?

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Background

A number of factors have driven the expansion of prescribing rights to professions not traditionally associated with this role, including the need to improve access to medicines and the evolution of professional scope. Commensurate with this change is the need to ensure graduates are fully equipped to undertake their prescribing role, and the identification of appropriate methods to demonstrate graduate prescribing competence.

Method

The ASsessment of PRescribing IN Health (ASPRINH) project aims to provide guidance to the assessment of prescribing competence by:

- (a) Reviewing existing methods employed to assess prescribing skills and knowledge (as defined by the NPS Competencies Required to Prescribe Medicines¹ - the Prescribing Competency Framework or PCF) across ten healthcare professions;
- (b) Reviewing national professional practice standards (e.g. competencies / practice guidelines) to identify those applicable to prescribing and
- (c) The development of an assessment 'toolkit' which may be used across healthcare professions to demonstrate student prescribing competence.

This paper will focus on the review of existing assessment methods across five health professions.

Results

A significant proportion of the PCF is reflected in the current learning outcomes for the five professions studied, regardless of existing prescribing status. Methods employed to assess prescribing differ according to profession. The most commonly employed assessment method is the written examination. A significant proportion of the PCF is currently addressed by individual professional practice standards/guidelines e.g. Optometry (92%) and Pharmacy (88%).

Discussion

The Health Professionals Prescribing Pathway Project² recommended higher education providers accept responsibility for ensuring graduates are capable of undertaking the task of prescribing where this forms part of accepted practice scope. The ASPRINH project aims to contribute to inter-professional consistency in the demonstration of prescribing competence and provide graduates with the competence and confidence to undertake this significant task.

References:

1. NPS. Better choices: Better health. Competencies required to prescribe medicines: putting quality use of medicines into practice. Sydney. National Prescribing Service Limited: 2012.
2. Health Workforce Australia. Health Professionals Prescribing Pathway (HPPP) Project. Final Report. Adelaide: Health Workforce Australia. 2013.