The particularly poor knowledge of anatomy demonstrated by the interns in the assessment suggests that this component should receive increased emphasis in the undergraduate curriculum. A good knowledge of anatomy is essential, not only to understanding any injury or disease process but also to safe practice in any clinical medical field. Our study group scored lowest in the anatomy-based questions, with an average score of 37.9 per cent, compared to the overall average score of 45.3 per cent.

Further study to define why our medical students perform poorly is required. A review of the curriculum including aspects like time allocation and content, as well as teaching methods and teacher skills is essential if we are to ensure that medical students, during the course of their undergraduate training, obtain the knowledge and skills which will enable them to go out into the community and practise good medicine.

There are several limitations to this study. Freedman and Bernstein’s musculoskeletal examination is the only validated assessment tool currently available. The authors of the questionnaire accept its weaknesses and acknowledge that its validity may be limited by ‘the distribution of the topics, the open response format, the wording of the questions, and the accepted answers’.

We used the pass mark of ≥73.1% established by 124 orthopaedic programme directors instead of that of ≥70% established by 240 internal medicine programme directors. Selecting the lower pass mark may have changed some of our findings. Our study may have been limited by sample bias, with participants coming exclusively from two large tertiary hospitals in Cape Town. Our intern group did however include graduates from all of the South African medical schools.

Conflict of interest statement

The content of this article is the sole work of the authors. We, the authors, confirm there is no financial or personal relationship with other people or organisations that may have inappropriately influenced this work. All authors were fully involved in this study and the preparation of the manuscript. We confirm that the material has not been submitted for publication elsewhere. Approval by Ethical Committee: Yes Informed consent was obtained: Yes. No benefits of any form have been received from a commercial party related directly or indirectly to the subject of this article.

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References


Prof Cas Motala

Char Publications was deeply saddened to learn of the sudden death of Prof Cas Motala in early November, while attending the Asia-Pacific Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology conference in Singapore. Prof Motala was a highly respected, loved and admired paediatrician and allergologist, husband, father, son and dear friend. Our condolences to all those who knew and loved him.