

Writing a pulmonary function test (PFT) report:
A novel objective structured clinical examination (OSCE)
station to assess the Communicator Role

Author:	L. Cheung
Institution:	University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta
Keywords:	PFT interpretation, Communicator, Respiriology, Medical Expert

Respirology residents are not only required to learn the relevant pulmonary physiology needed to interpret a pulmonary function test (PFT), but must also develop the skills to interpret such tests and write appropriate PFT reports. Traditionally, short-answer question examinations or objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) have been designed to assess the required knowledge but not the relevant skills pertaining to PFT interpretation. In other words, these examinations usually ask focused questions testing knowledge on specific aspects of pulmonary physiology.

We designed and implemented an OSCE station that asks Respirology residents to write an actual PFT report, just as they would in real-life practice, thus assessing both the Medical Expert and Communicator Roles simultaneously. We developed a checklist of features that the residents must include in their reports, awarding marks not only for a correct interpretation but also for appropriate clarity and written communication in their reports. The checklist was developed by achieving consensus among the local staff respirologists regarding the basic features needed in a good PFT report.

Such an OSCE station enables us to evaluate the resident's ability to integrate knowledge of pulmonary physiology with the practical skills of test interpretation and written communication. This approach of simply asking the residents to do a task on an OSCE as they would in real-life clinical practice is an excellent way to perform a global assessment of their performance and can be used for other specialty-specific tasks.