

Teaching clinical skill assessment of normal child development to medical students:
An integrated, evidence-based approach

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We have integrated several published strategies on teaching normal development clinical skills into a small-group learning experience for second-year medical students to address the practical and logistical problems of approaches used individually.

Second-year medical students are divided into small groups for a 2-hour clinical skills block in normal child development. Groups rotate through four 30-minute stations, each set up with a volunteer parent-child dyad, appropriate toys and a preceptor. The 4 developmental stages represented are infant, toddler, preschool and kindergarten. Parents interact normally with their child and provide developmental history as requested. The preceptor's role is to encourage interaction between the parent-child dyad, to help students make naturalistic observations about development and ask appropriate history, and to demonstrate the use of a screening tool, the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). Rooms are equipped with a computer and flatscreen TV with immediate access to DVD video clips for backup should there be not enough "live" parent-child dyads, if a child becomes ill or if during the session a child becomes fatigued or non-cooperative. DVDs were prepared in advance using volunteer families to mirror the ideal educational experience.

Medical student evaluations using a Likert scale (1 = low, 5 = high) have rated the experience consistently 4/5 or greater. Student comments were strongly positive, especially about use of live parent-child dyads. This integrated approach is highly acceptable to medical students. Video-clip usage, live dyads, clear written objectives and use of a standardized tool preserve the interaction and immediacy of a clinical encounter while maintaining consistency in content.