Promoting High Quality Research on the College’s Assessments -
A Summary of Research on the MRCGP

For over 20 years, the RCGP has encouraged the undertaking and publication of research on the assessments towards ‘MRCGP’.

Mindful of its responsibilities to the AiTs who undertake the assessments, the need to preserve appropriate confidentiality, and its obligations under the Data Protection Acts, the College is nevertheless keen to encourage MRCGP examiners and others to make use of the wealth of material that it collects, towards better understanding of the educational and assessment processes and their continuing improvement. In the first instance interested individuals should contact the MRCGP Research and Development Lead at exams@rcgp.org.uk in order to obtain appropriate advice.

Dr Mei Ling Denney
MRCGP R+D Lead, 2010 - 2016

Published Research on the MRCGP Examinations

Please note: We only list and include published papers and oral paper and / or poster presentations that are directly concerned with the MRCGP assessments. MRCGP examiners’ work can be put on this website, but we do not have the website capacity nor the necessary permissions to provide the actual research articles, or links to other pages. Please contact the individual examiner if you wish to obtain more details of their work, including papers, slides plus abstract of talks, posters etc. Conference workshops have not been included. The list is not meant to be exhaustive and there may be significant omissions – if you are aware of these, please let us know. Please include unpublished research on the MRCGP Examinations such as Masters dissertations.

We are also including a few papers that have not been written by examiners, but concern the MRCGP assessments, and seminal papers which do not necessarily cover the MRCGP assessments but have played a significant role in influencing or developing the exams.

Work is listed under individual authors by leading author, with most recent work listed higher up in date order.

This document will be updated on an annual basis.

Research work post-2008, on ‘Old’ Examinations and ‘New’ Assessments for MRCGP


Bodgener S & Tavabie A. Is there a value to case-based discussion? Education for Primary Care, 2011; 22: 223-228.

Cobb JJ. How to write a CSA Case. InnovAIT, Vol 5, No 9 (Sept 2012), pp. 571-572


Denney ML, Wiener-Ogilvie S. Piloting a Quality Improvement Project in Final Year General Practice Trainees: Setting up and evaluating the processes. Education for Prim Care, 07 Mar 2016. pp. 1-6 DOI: 10.1080/14739879.2016.1144965
Denney ML & Wakeford R. Do role-players affect the outcome of a high-stakes postgraduate OSCE, in terms of candidate sex or ethnicity? Results from an analysis of the 52,702 anonymised case scores from one year of the MRCGP clinical skills assessment, Education for Primary Care, 20 Dec 2015. DOI: 10.1080/14739879.2015.1113724
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14739879.2015.1113724

Denney ML, Freeman Adrian, Wakeford R. MRCGP CSA: Are the examiners biased, favouring their own by sex, ethnicity, and degree source? BJGP, November 2013, pp. e718-e725(8). http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/rcgp/bjgp/pre-prints/content-BJGP-2013-63-616-e718

Denney ML, Wakeford R, Hawthorne K et al. Experiences of simulated patients and candidates in the MRCGP Simulated Surgery examination. Education for Primary Care 2006; 17; 354-361


Mamelok J. Achieving a consensus on educational objectives and assessments for EGPT in specialty training programmes for licensing in GP. Education for Primary Care July 2013 24: 4, pp 258-266.

Mamelok J. Developing assessments for enhanced specialty training programmes for licensing in GP. Editorial, Education for Primary Care July 2013 24:4, pp 230-234.

McManus, IC and Wakeford, R. PLAB and UK graduates’ performance on MRCP(UK) and MRCGP examinations: data linkage study. BMJ 2014; 348 (Published 17 April 2014). http://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g2621


Patterson, F; Tavabie, A; Denney, ML; Kerrin, M; Ashworth, V; Koczvara A; MacLeod S. A new competency model for general practice: implications for selection, training, and careers. BJGP Volume 63, Number 610, May 2013 , pp. e331-e338(8) www.ingentaconnect.com/content/rcgp/bjgp/2013/00000063/00000610/art00034


Roberts C, Atkins S & Hawthorne K. Performance Features in Clinical Skills Assessment: Linguistic and Cultural Factors in the MRCGP exam. Centre for Language, Discourse &
Rughani A and Lees P. Leadership training: fitness for purpose or fitness for the future? Editorial in Education for Primary care (2013) 24: 15-18


Rughani A; Godden A, Patterson D; Smithson H. Training for leadership. Br J Gen Pract. 2012 Jan;62(594): 8-9(2)


Russell, D; Simpson, R; Eden, M; Foreman, P. “The use of child actors to simulate paediatric patients in the MRCGP Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA): developing an effective model” Education for Primary Care 26.4 July 2015 pp 242-247

Russell D, Etherington C, Hawthorne K. How can simulated patients’ experiences suggest ways to improve candidate performance in the MRCGP clinical assessments? Education for Primary Care 2012 23(6):391-8

Russell D, Simpson R, Rendel S. Standardisation of role players for the Clinical Skills Assessment of the MRCGP. Education for Primary Care 2011: 22; 166–70


Wakeford, R. International medical graduates’ relative under-performance in the MRCGP AKT and CSA examinations. Education for Primary Care May 2012 23(3):148-152(5).


Conference Papers, and Poster Presentations post-2008, presented nationally or internationally

Atkins S, Roberts C and Hawthorne K. A sociolinguistic study of communicative features in the GP ’Clinical Skills Assessment’: why might certain candidates be performing less well? Poster, AMEE 2012, Lyons
Atkins S, Roberts C and Hawthorne K. Sociolinguistic factors affecting the performance in the MRCGP Clinical Skills Assessment - are poor candidates that easy to spot? Poster, AMEE 2014, Milan, and RCGP Annual Conference 2014, Liverpool.

Atkins, S., Roberts, C. and Hawthorne, K. Simulated consultations, real assessments. COMET (Communication Medicine and Ethics) Conference, Institute of Mental Health, Nottingham, July 2011

Bewick M, Munro N, Patterson F, Wakeford. Setting the Standard for the nMRCGP Clinical Skills Assessment Poster AMEE Annual Conference, Prague, September 2008

Cobb J. Outcome analysis of case adjustment for the MRCGP CSA: Can we make easy cases harder? Poster AMEE Annual Conference, Glasgow, September 2010

Cobb J. Qualitative analysis of case challenge and reliability in the Clinical Skills Assessment of the MRCGP. Poster, AMEE 2013, Prague,


Deighan M. How well do Selection Scores Predict Trainee Performance in the CSA exam? Poster, AMEE Conference, Prague, 2013


Denney ML, Freeman A. Are visitors to a high-stakes OSCE exam more help than hindrance? Poster, RCGP Annual Conference 2014, Liverpool.

Denney ML & Wakeford R, Do individual roleplayers systematically bias the outcome of a high-stakes postgraduate OSCE, in terms of candidate ethnicity? Paper presentation, Ottawa conference 2014, Ottawa

Denney ML & Wakeford R. Significant variations in Clinical Postgraduate Examination Performance by Medical School of Graduation: Results from three years of the MRCGP Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) & Correlation with MRCP(UK) ‘PACES’. Paper presentation Ottawa Conference 2012, Kuala Lumpur


Denney ML, Rughani A, Foreman P. Selecting examiners for a national family medicine examination (MRCGP): Matching tools to required examiner competencies, averting deselection of inadequate examiners. Poster Ottawa Conference 2012, Kuala Lumpur

Denney ML, Rughani A, Foreman P. Selecting examiners for a national family medicine examination (MRCGP): Matching tools to required examiner competencies, averting deselection of inadequate examiners. Poster Ottawa Conference 2012, Kuala Lumpur
Denney ML, Wakeford R: Are older trainees wiser? Relating MRCGP candidates' OSCE performance to the time since their first medical qualification. Paper presentation AMEE 2011, Vienna

Denney ML, Wakeford R: Quality Assuring 300 examiners for a national high-stakes OSCE (nMRCGP): achieving examiner consistency via selection, training, monitoring and feedback. Poster AMEE 2008, Prague


Denney ML, Wakeford R. Do individual roleplayers systematically bias the outcome of a high-stakes postgraduate OSCE, in terms of candidate ethnicity? Paper presentation, Ottawa conference 2014, Ottawa


Denney ML, Wakeford R. The Structure of Failure - an analysis of the patterns of consulting behaviour amongst failing candidates in a high-stakes postgraduate OSCE towards enhancing the quality of candidate feedback. Paper presentation AMEE 2010, Glasgow

Denney ML, Wakeford R. Which UK medical schools produce the highest scoring GP trainees? Poster, RCGP Annual Primary Care Conference October 2013 Harrogate

Foreman P, Denney ML. Potential New Examiners (PNE) for the Clinical Skills Assessment Examination where do they go wrong. Poster, AMEE 2010, Glasgow

Foreman P, Denney ML. Potential new examiners for the Clinical Skills Assessment Examination where do they go wrong? Poster AMEE Annual Conference, Glasgow, September 2010

Foreman P. The effects of roleplayer-candidate interactions on fairness in the CSA: an observational study of roleplayer performance based on analysis of CSA video recordings. Poster, AMEE 2013, Prague


Freeman A & Wakeford R. Should we limit the number of attempts for high stakes, licensing examinations? Paper presentation, AMEE 2012, Lyons


Freeman A, Blow C, Wakeford R. How many times should you be allowed to take a licensing examination? Paper presentation AMEE 2010, Glasgow

Hawthorne K, Selby M, Knight R. Making global judgements in CSA/ clinical structured assessments - the pros and cons. Poster AMEE 2010, Glasgow


Mamelok J. Curriculum and assessment in extended GP training. Poster, RCGP Primary Care Conference 2012, Glasgow

Mamelok J. Delphi research on objectives for EGPT. Presentation at UKCEA September 2011

Mamelok J. WPBA - The RDMP Model, defining the sufficiency of evidence in WPBA. Presentation UKAPDS/NAPCE/ UKCEA Joint symposium, July 2011

Marr C. Indicators of underperformance. Poster, RCGP Annual Conference 2014, Liverpool.


Rees J, Denney ML. Creating Physical Exemplars- Orange Underpants and Other Issues: an overview of a new RCGP e-learning project. Poster, RCGP Primary Care Conference 2010, Harrogate; AMEE 2010, Glasgow

Russell D, Etherington C, Hawthorne K. How can simulated patients’ experiences suggest ways to improve candidate performance in the MRCGP clinical assessments? Education for Primary Care 2012; 23(6); 391-398. 8.


Wakeford R, Denney ML. Do Examiners favour their own kind? A study of examiners’ grades by their own and their candidates’ gender, ethnicity and background. Paper presentation, AMEE 2010, Glasgow


Wakeford R. Theatrical dove or hawkish wassock? The consistency of examiner behaviour in a national postgraduate clinical examination. Paper presentation, Ottawa conference 2014, Ottawa


**Research work pre-2008, largely on ‘Old’ MRCGP Examinations**


Denney ML, Wakeford R, Hawthorne K et al. Experiences of simulated patients and candidates in the MRCGP Simulated Surgery examination. Education for Primary Care 2006: 17; 354-361


Dixon H. Candidates' views of the MRCGP examination and its effect upon approaches to learning. A questionnaire study in the Northern Deanery Education for Primary Care 2003: 14; 146-157

Dixon H. The multiple-choice paper of the MRCGP examination: a study of candidates’ views of its content and effect on learning. Education for Primary Care 2006: 16(6); 655-662.


Munro N, Hawthorne K, Denney ML, Sales D, Robinson C, Rughani A, Patterson F, Lewis M and Wass V. Developing a new clinical skills assessment (CSA) for licensing UK general practitioners; the why and the how. Education for Primary Care 2006:17:301-10

Denney ML, Wakeford R, Hawthorne K, Bewick M. Experiences of simulated patients and candidates in the MRCGP Simulated Surgery examination: does role-playing affect simulated patients? Are their perceptions of GPs altered? Education for Primary Care 2006:17; 354-361


McKinstry B, Guthrie B, Freeman G, Heaney D. Is success in postgraduate examinations associated with family practitioners’ attitudes or patient perceptions of the quality of their consultations? A cross-sectional study of the MRCGP examination in Great Britain. Family Practice 2005: 22(6); 653-657

McKinstry B, Walker J, Blaney D, Heaney D, Begg D. Do patients and expert doctors agree on the assessment of consultation skills? A comparison of two patient consultation assessment scales with the video component of the MRCGP. Family Practice 2004: 21(1); 75-80.


Swanwick T. The video component of the MRCGP examination: threats to validity. Education for Primary Care 2004: 15; 311-327.


**Conference Papers, and Poster Presentations pre-2008, presented nationally or internationally**

Bewick M, Munro N, Patterson F, Wakeford. Setting the Standard for the nMRCGP Clinical Skills Assessment Poster AMEE 2008, Prague

Denney ML, Wakeford R: Quality Assuring 300 examiners for a national high-stakes OSCE (nMRCGP): achieving examiner consistency via selection, training, monitoring and feedback. Poster AMEE 2008, Prague

Unpublished Research on the MRCGP Examinations

This space is for significant pieces of unpublished work eg Masters dissertations.

Denney ML. Making assessment fair in the MRCGP: A Summary of Research and Development related to the Clinical Skills Assessment and Applied Knowledge Test. Paper submitted to the MRCGP leads & accepted for RCGP website, January 2015.


Etherington C. Experiences and expertise of simulated patients in the Clinical Skills Assessment Examination of the Royal College of General Practitioners. Dissertation for MA Clinical Education, Edgehill University, 2010.


Foreman P. The effects of roleplayer- candidate interactions on fairness in the CSA. Dissertation, Masters degree, University of Bedfordshire, 2013


Other research papers which have played a significant role in influencing or developing the MRCGP assessments


Sinclair C. Investigation into potential sources of linguistic or cultural bias in the AKT, University of Southampton, April 2014


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