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Abstract:

Background
In an integrated curriculum, in which discipline-based tests have been replaced with multi-disciplinary examinations, serious challenges may arise when students deliberately leave out the content of those disciplines that have smaller weight in each block exam. While reporting disciplinary scores goes against the grain of integration, by calculating an overall score, some of the students possibly will not study some disciplines. We describe the experience of Tehran University of Medical Sciences, where an organ-based integrated curriculum has been launched since September 2011.

Summary of work
In the first academic year, students passed 4 blocks: Introductory, Respiratory, Cardiovascular, and Musculoskeletal. Each block included anatomy, histology, physiology, and embryology. To perform integrated assessment, questions from different disciplines were presented in single booklet while 10% of questions were truly interdisciplinary. Instead of recording each discipline's score separately, the overall block score was reported. Furthermore, cumulative disciplinary score was calculated at the end of the year.

Summary of results
In the end of the year, 54 medical students out of 159 did not achieve the required cumulative disciplinary score. In physiology, anatomy, histology, and embryology the number of failed students were 4, 8, 11, and 24, respectively. They were referred to take a disciplinary examination.

Conclusions
Comparing number of students who failed disciplines with low credits (e.g. histology) versus number of failed students in disciplines with high credits (e.g. physiology) suggests that the later ones had systematically been ignored by some students. The calculation of a cumulative disciplinary score reduces concern due to this problem in the integrated assessment.

Take-home message

Keywords:

1. Assessment: All
24. Curriculum: Integration