Confidence in performing essential manual skills of Thai medical students completing externship training

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Background:
The Thai Medical Council has decreed the essential manual skills that medical graduates should be competent in and all students are to be instructed in these skills. However, an evaluation of the confidence levels of medical students in performing these essential manual skills following instruction and their evaluation of their learning experience has not been studied.

Objective:
To survey the confidence levels and experience of medical graduates completing externship training in performing essential procedures.

Methods:
A questionnaire was developed to survey the confidence levels of the students completing externship training in the essential manual skills and their learning experience using a 1-5 rating scale with 4-5 deemed ‘satisfactory’.

Results:
Ninety-nine medical graduates completed the questionnaire. Among the 17 essential procedures, the mean confidence levels varied from 3.35 to 4.57 (Figure 1). More than 80% of the graduates had satisfactory confidence levels in performing 11 of the essential procedures (i.e. amniotomy, pelvic examination with Pap smear, wound suture, excision of benign lesion, incision and drainage, debridement, gastric lavage, external splint application, digital nerve block, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and endotracheal intubation) (Figure 2).

A subgroup analysis for the ratings of their learning experiences showed that a satisfactory confidence level was achieved in all procedures if they had performed the procedure on more than 10 cases (Figure 3). More than half of the procedures required only 5 to 10 cases to reach a satisfactory result. Learning experiences involving less than 5 cases never reached the satisfactory confidence goal (Figure 3).

Conclusion:
To achieve a satisfactory confidence level for externs in performing essential procedures, learning resources should be adequately provided so that each essential procedure is performed in a minimum of 5 to 10 cases.

Take-home message:
Learning to perform essential manual skills with confidence requires at least 5 to 10 cases for medical students before graduation.