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Is competence by design any better than excellence by accident?

Urology was the second specialty cohort to adopt competency-based medical education (CBME) in 2018. The consensus of the Urology Specialty Committee leading up to implementation was that we were a relatively small, innovative, and flexible specialty that should jump on board early and have an influence on the educational frameworks. This approach was perceived to be superior to having pre-established templates imposed upon us down the road. The creation of the Urology CBME framework was laborious and contentious, with many stakeholders from around the country contributing. The resulting document suites and entrusted professional activities (EPAs) were imperfect as we rolled out the initiative. The results of the survey published in this month's issue of *CUAJ* clearly reflect those imperfections.¹

For example, most respondents are dissatisfied with CBD (69%) owing to a host of factors that include evaluation fatigue and a perceived lack of improvement in patient care and safety. There has been no apparent change in the pathway to graduation or a de-emphasis on time-based learning and examinations (these were the main selling points of CBD after all!). In addition, the majority of faculty feel that the EPAs don't reflect actual clinical practice.

Conversely, >80% of trainees feel that feedback from attendings on EPAs is not helpful. Overall, approximately 2/3 of faculty feel that CBME should either be abolished or kept only if major improvements are made. Nearly 100% of residents feel the same.

The one positive aspect of CBME noted by respondents was that it is perceived to provide a more rigorous framework for training and that it has clarified learning expectations and training stages.

So is competence by design (CBD) any better than our "old" system of excellence by accident? At this point, the answer from those in the trenches is a resounding no.

Whether CBD 2.0 can correct this remains to be seen.

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REFERENCE

1. Nguyen D-D, Lafontaine M-L, Mann U, et al. Five years of competency-based medical education in Canadian urology: A national survey of senior resident and faculty satisfaction and perspectives. *Can Urol Assoc J* 2025;19:104-8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5489/cuaj.8947>

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