

Hidden in plain sight

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Hidden in Plain Sight:

The Untapped Potential of Written Assessment Comments

Shiphra Ginsburg

1. The language that clinical supervisors use in their written assessments of trainees can be vague yet is still meaningful.
2. Assessment is a face threatening act for both the assessor and the learner.
3. Clinical supervisors often hedge in their assessment comments and this may serve an important social purpose.
- 4 Subjectivity is becoming more accepted by assessment researchers and may at least be tolerated by learners.
5. "If everyone and everything must be excellent and most cannot be, then would this not lead to a sense of failure in the majority?" Trudie Roberts, "When I say ... excellent".¹
6. Weighing the pig doesn't make it grow. (Old folk saying)
7. Qualitative data can be meaningfully incorporated into a validity argument to support assessment.
8. It is important not to conflate assessment with feedback. Doing so creates tensions that are difficult to reconcile.
9. "Talking about art is like dancing about architecture". (Attributed to David Bowie, among others)
10. "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new".
Albert Einstein
11. "The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity".
Dorothy Parker

September 2016

1. Roberts T. When I say ... excellent. *Med Educ.* 2015;49(12):1187-1188.