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Alan J Kilistoff

University of Alberta, Canada

Manual dexterity test for admissions: Have we asked the right question?

Psycho-motor skills form the basis of much of Dentistry. Competence in being able to prepare and restore teeth is a prime requirement of graduation from dental school. Very little is done to assess the psycho-motor ability of applying dental school candidates in most school admission protocols. Historically, a manual dexterity test (soap carving) has been used in admissions to evaluate pre-dental students, but has proved inconclusive. It was concluded through a literature, that their manual dexterity test did not add any information to current admission criteria. Their test was not a dentally authentic skill, and they compared test performance to grades. Our approach is to use an authentic skill, and to compare performance on the test to the time required by students to achieve a passing grade. A novel wax carving protocol is being examined as a possible manual dexterity test. Following ethics approval, first year dental students from the University of Alberta, participated in the wax carving protocol. This test was administered on their first day in the simulation laboratory (January), and again just before summer break (end of June). The students were asked to record the number of hours they spent in developing these skills both in class and extracurricular. The test artifacts were photographed using a standardized protocol and the photographs were graded by 3 independent instructors. Students with lower test scores spent significantly more time practicing in order to achieve a passing grade. This test may prove useful in admission criteria for dental school.

Biography

Alan J Kilistoff is currently working as a Clinical Professor at the University of Alberta, Edmonton Alberta, Canada. He graduated from the University of British Columbia, Canada, with a DMD, and practiced in a private clinic for 28 years. He started teaching at the University of British Columbia in 2000. He moved to the University of Saskatchewan in 2005. In 2012, he moved to the University of Alberta. He received a Master of Education Technology degree from the University of British Columbia. His current interests include ergonomics and dental loupes magnification, dental materials, dental education (particularly psycho-motor skill development) and operative dentistry.

kilistof@ualberta.ca

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