A bottom up approach of identifying problematic curriculum topics

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Introduction
Learning outcomes are an important measure of implementation of curriculum set goals and teaching quality and should therefore be assessed by a variety of evaluation tools. We researched student self-assessment of their practical skills as a way of identifying problematic curriculum topics, providing feedback and evaluating the need for or success of implementation of a competency based curriculum.

Methods
Seventy-two students from the 3rd-5th year of medical school at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Maribor, Slovenia were asked to evaluate their knowledge on 95 specific practical skills encompassing three subjects. The survey evaluated their self-perceived knowledge and the location or teaching method by which they have gained the specified competence (purely theoretical knowledge, during a mandatory or elective rotation, on an exchange or during voluntary work in the ward). The evaluated practical skills were taken out of the knowledge and skills catalogue, which is a part of the schools curriculum. The skills were defined identically as in the schools learning outcome curriculum enabling quicker and easier comparison of students self-assessed level of competence with the knowledge level required by the catalogue. Discrepancies between the required knowledge levels and self-assessed competences pointed us towards practical skills, which are not executed or emphasized enough during the process of education.

Results
72 student completed the survey, which showed which skills are not executed or emphasized enough during the students’ education. Figure 1 presents a general overview of results by larger groups of skills which were evaluated.

Discussion
Student self-evaluation of their knowledge is an useful way of gaining feedback on the quality and possible gaps in the process of education. It is an easily implementable tool to identify strengths and weaknesses of a particular course and to better understand students’ perceived competency after completing the course.

Conclusion
Student self-assessment of their competencies is an easy to implement way of identifying problematic curricular topics.

Required and evaluated knowledge level by area

![Figure 1: Comparison of students self-assessed knowledge levels in comparison to required levels.](image)
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