



Medical Student Performance Records in Canadian Medical Schools

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Introduction

Over the past few years, the Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) has become increasingly interested in evaluating the utility of the Medical Student Performance Record (MSPR). In 2014, the CFMS education committee reviewed current MSPR documents across the country and found variation in MSPR format across schools. In 2015, the CFMS surveyed student leaders in order to understand medical students' opinions about:

- the current format of the MSPR and,
- how medical students believe the format of the MSPR can be improved.

The survey results helped to inform the development of formal recommendations. A survey was used in order to efficiently gather independent opinions from all CFMS member schools.

We received a total of 14 responses from student leaders (medical society presidents or academic representatives) across Canada, which captured all of the member schools of the CFMS.

Recommendation 1: Modification of the MSPR is needed in order to enhance its general utility in the selection of residents.

When student leaders were asked to rate on a 5 point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) about their level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements: "I believe that MSPRs in their CURRENT form are useful in the selection of candidates for residency," the mean rating across 14 responses was 2.93 out of 5 (Figure 1). This suggests that on average, students are fairly neutral about the MSPRs being useful in their current form for the selection of residents.

When students were asked about their level of agreement/disagreement about the potential usefulness of MSPRs with the statement: "I believe that MSPRs have the POTENTIAL to be useful in the selection of candidates for residency", the mean rating across 14 responses was 4 out of 5 (Figure 2). This suggests that on average, students agree that the MSPR could potentially be useful for the selection of residents.

In summary, the survey results from 14 student leaders indicated that they are neutral about the usefulness of the current MSPRs for the selection of residents but are in agreement about the potential usefulness of MSPRs for the selection of residents. Given this, we can conclude that, although the MSPR has the potential to be a useful document in postgraduate trainee selection, it is not presently attaining that potential.

Recommendation 2: Medical schools should redesign the MSPR to minimize the overlap between performance data collected between MSPRs and other CaRMS application documents.

Although most student leaders agreed that MSPR components such as research, faculty affiliated awards and scholarships, faculty affiliated leadership and community service were useful in the selection of residents (Figure 3), students are concerned about the duplication of reporting between MSPRs and the CaRMS CV. In particular, the MSPR is seen as a standalone document that should contribute unique elements to the residency application. At present, students are concerned that redundancy with other existing application documents may limit the usefulness of the MSPR as an independent component of the CaRMS application.

There are 5 components that are uniquely captured by the MSPR (Table 1): quantitative scores for electives/core rotations (numeric), qualitative evaluations for electives/core rotations (narrative comments), failure/repetition of courses, professionalism issues, and summary of pre-clerkship activities. There are 3 components currently in the MSPR but are also captured in other CaRMS documents: faculty affiliated awards and scholarships, research, faculty affiliated leadership and community service.

Recommendation 3: Medical schools should inform students about MSPRs (specifically, what information is being collected for the MSPR) at the beginning of medical school and throughout medical school.

Students early in their medical education may have limited awareness of the MSPR and information included, even though collection MSPR information often begins in the first year of medical school. To increase transparency in the process, students should be made aware of MSPRs (specifically, what information is being collected for the MSPR) at the beginning of medical school and throughout medical school. Given that the MSPR serves as a record of each student from their first year of medical school to graduation, early awareness of students to this document and what it records will be necessary. This awareness may help students make more informed decisions about the aspects of performance that are captured on the MSPR to maximize their likelihood of success in the CaRMS match.

Recommendation 4: Medical schools across Canada should standardize the documentation of professionalism issues on MSPR focusing on the severity of reportable issues, assessment of, and the reporting of professionalism issues.

The greatest number of student leaders selected professionalism (+/-absenteeism) as a useful component on the MSPR for the selection of residents (Figure 3). This may be because this component is not captured elsewhere in their CaRMS applications (Table 1). However, students are concerned about the lack of standardization of the severity of reportable issues, of assessment and reporting of professionalism across schools. The present lack of standardization makes the interpretation of professionalism issues found on the MSPR difficult for postgraduate medical education programs when selecting residents.

Recommendation 5: Medical schools should reassess the value and usefulness of including quantitative evaluations on MSPRs.

When students were asked to select the MSPR components that they feel are not useful for resident selection (Figure 4), the greatest number of students felt that quantitative scores for electives/core rotations (numeric) was not useful. Given that all of the CFMS schools run pass / fail curricula and when grading scales are reported on the MSPR, they vary widely between different schools, the meaning of a particular grade value is often not clear to a residency program. Given this, the CFMS recommends that the value of including these scales on the MSPR be re-assessed.

Recommendation 6: Medical schools should standardize the collection of and reporting of data in MSPRs across Canadian medical schools.

Students are concerned about the lack of standardization in the reporting of multiple MSPR components including quantitative scores for electives/core rotations (numeric), research activities and faculty affiliated leadership and community service. Specific to leadership and community service, students are concerned with the current reporting of faculty affiliated leadership and community service and feel that it is unfair to limit the MSPR to faculty-affiliated activities only. Therefore, if leadership and community services activities continue to be reported on MSPRs, reporting should be expanded to include non-faculty affiliated activities.

Recommendation 7: Medical schools should continue to capture information about qualitative evaluations for electives/core rotations (narrative comments).

When students were asked to select the MSPR components that they feel are most useful for the selection of residents (Figure 3), students agreed that qualitative evaluations for electives/core rotations (narrative comments) is one of the most useful components for resident selection.

Appendix

Figure 1: I believe that MSPRs in their CURRENT form are useful in the selection of candidates for residency.

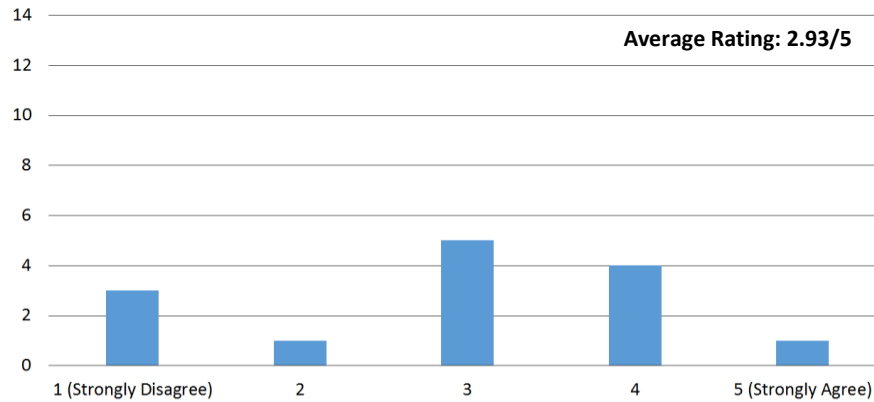


Figure 2: I believe that MSPRs have the POTENTIAL to be useful in the selection of candidates for residency.

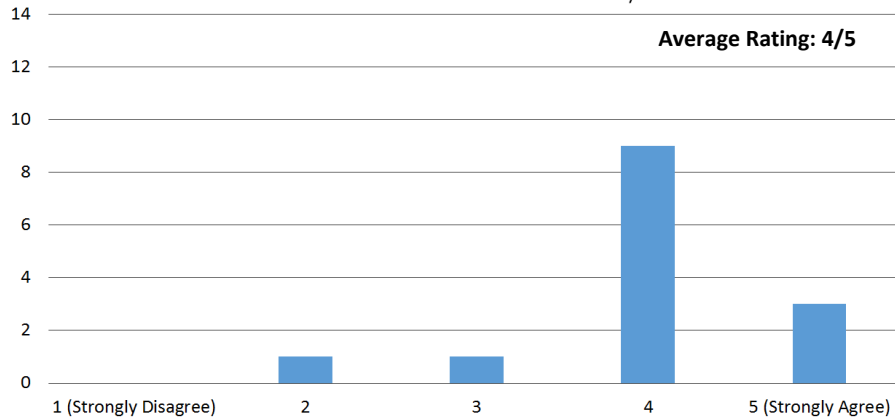


Figure 3: What components of the MSPR do you think are HELPFUL in the selection of candidates for residency?

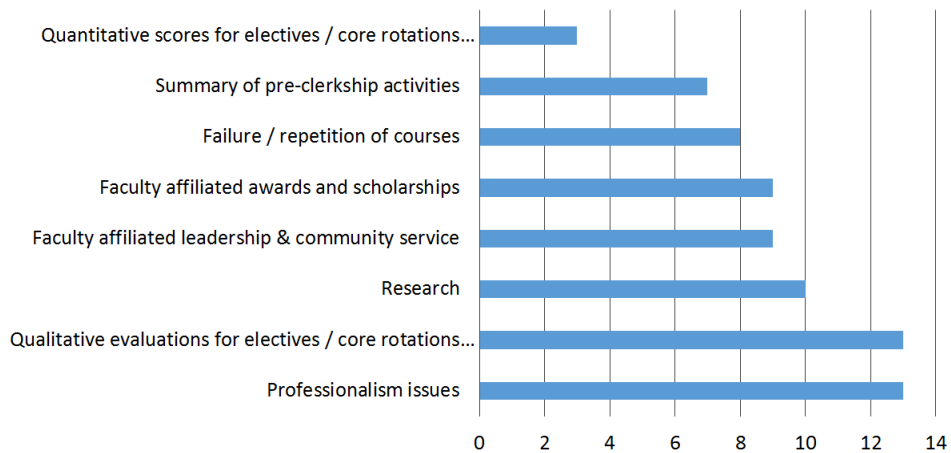


Figure 4: What components of the MSPR do you think are NOT HELPFUL in the selection of candidates for residency?

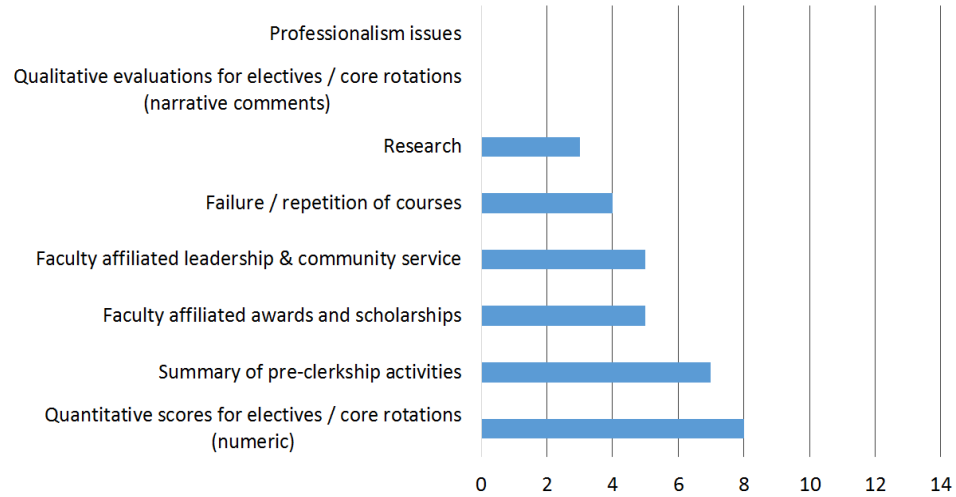


Table 1: Performance Components that are Uniquely Captured in MSPRs

MSPR Component	Uniquely Captured in MSPRs?
Quantitative scores for electives / core rotations (numeric)	✓
Qualitative evaluations for electives / core rotations (narrative comments)	✓
Failure / repetition of courses	✓
Professionalism issues	✓
Summary of pre-clerkship activities	✓
Faculty affiliated awards and scholarships	✗
Research	✗
Faculty affiliated leadership & community service	✗