

38 The Influence of Anonymity on Resident Evaluations

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Background: Learners desire timely, constructive and explicit feedback. While anonymous, global monthly evaluations with composite comments have been used by our program as an evaluative tool, they may not be trusted due to the lack of identification of the evaluator. However, identified evaluations may compromise in other ways.

Objectives: To determine whether transitioning from anonymous to identified evaluations would result in changes to the quality of the evaluation provided. We also sought to characterize perceptions of evaluations on the part of trainees and faculty.

Methods: In a pre/post comparison, we evaluated 1 month of anonymous and 1 month of identified evaluations. We examined: number of evaluations and comments, faculty participation, and milestone level assigned. We scored comments by: not actionable (generic or excessively vague) or actionable (specific or constructive). Residents and faculty were surveyed regarding their opinion of the evaluation process.

Results: Evaluations completed (142 anonymous versus 130 identified) and faculty participation (26 versus 25) did not change. When identified, faculty did not inflate the milestone level assigned (0.13 SD 0.40). Total number of words did increase ((12.0 SD 16.3) versus (21.2 SD 29.0)), though there was little difference in comment quality. Residents (n=43, 80% response) and faculty (n=34, 52% response) surveys revealed significant differences in perception of evaluation accuracy, concordance with verbal feedback and perception of constructiveness, with faculty rating more positively ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: Concerns that identification of the evaluator would compromise content and participation were not born out in pre/post comparison. Long-term effects on faculty-trainee relationships will need further assessment as there are significant differences in the perceptions of the evaluation process and the impact of the transition from an anonymous to identified system.