Salford Communication and Language Assessment Resource (SCoLAR)
Safe Communication Skills for International Doctors

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Summary
Problems with international clinicians’ language and communication skills have been highlighted in the media recently. More attention is now given to preventing errors by staff new to NHS practice. Salford Communication and Language Assessment Resource (SCoLAR) supports clinical staff and helps them improve their communication skills. Assessments are performed in full OSCE settings. These are observed by both linguists and clinicians to identify specific needs. This is supplemented with further training. This resource has been used for the assessment and training of clinicians in specialty training in the Midlands and North West.

Background
Reache North West provides education and training for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) who hold refugee status or who are currently going through the asylum process. Reache has used its experience to establish the Salford Communication and Language Assessment Resource (SCoLAR) to offer support to non-refugee IMGs (including those from the European Union). With increasing concerns over language and communication skills affecting patient safety (Pilotto et al, 2007; Independent, 2010) the 2010 Health Select Committee calling for language testing for European doctors, and the Health Secretary (2012) calling for a legal duty of care in respect of language ability, SCoLAR offers the appropriate advice and support.

SCoLAR uses a multidisciplinary team of linguists and clinicians to observe, assess and feedback on language and communication skills in clinical scenarios to ensure that training and non-training doctors have appropriate support and advice available. A safe structured environment is created by the skilled and experienced tutors to enable feedback to be very direct, safe and to ensure that there are no misunderstandings.

Observed Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) scenarios are used for assessment and training, integrating the simulated patient (actor) feedback. This gives the doctors the added dimension of an assessment of patient satisfaction with the clinical encounter. Alongside the OSCE style scenario the multi-disciplinary team deconstruct the clinical encounters into linguistic and communication features.

Further Training is available to ensure written communication is accurate and safe. Linguistic skills such as dictation and summarisation are taken out of the clinical context and practised independently before being integrated and consolidated into a clinical scenario (Cross and Smalldridge, 2011).

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Feedback from participants has been positive

• Excellent small group and individual feedback
• Excellent day - could take so much from it
• Once a month please
• Very supportive in correcting the language and suggesting alternatives appropriately
• Excellent opportunity to practice and get feedback
• Good feedback - honest and safe
• Every possible opportunity was taken to give feedback and also facilitation to reflect
• Course was helpful, informative and enjoyable
• Trainers very supportive

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