Programmatic Assessment – the vision and the reality for a large Australian cohort

Deborah O'mara[1], Associate Professor Kellie Charles[1], Dr Nidhi Garg[1], Professor Jane Bleasel[1]
[1]*University Of Sydney Medical School, Sydney, Australia*

Introduction:
Programmatic Assessment (PA) is a system of assessment that is increasingly used in medical education. Key features include assessment for learning with relatively frequent lower stakes assessments. Progression decisions are made holistically through synthesis of information from multiple sources, including academic, clinical and professionalism assessments.

Most of the literature on PA is theoretical, describing the ideal components of this system of assessment. Examples of implementation include small cohorts and/or are based in the Dutch medical system which has a staggered intake and graduation.

A number of medical schools have implemented components of PA, in some cases due to managing a policy change implementation gradually. The University of Sydney Medical School have introduced a pragmatic version of PA based on what can be viably conducted with a large cohort that need to be graduated simultaneously.

Purpose:
The purpose of this PeArLs session is to discuss the juxtaposition between the vision and the reality of PA in the context of Australasian medical education. We will briefly outline our experiences using a policy evaluation model: the intended and unintended consequences and the anticipated and unanticipated outcomes which inherently includes ambiguous elements.

Issues for exploration or ideas for discussion:
The following issues and questions will be explored and discussed. We will assume that participants have an understanding PA as described in the medical education literature.

• How much of the vision of PA is required to still call it PA?
• What are the essential components of PA?
• Is the Learning advisor/mentor/assessor model required and which is best?
• Do you need an eportfolio to make programmatic assessment work?
• How do you make a holistic decision for the whole cohort for each year eg 1200 students?
• How do you deal with the ambiguity in the judgement of professionalism issues?