Assessing student perception of using ExamSoft platform for test taking in a pharmacy curriculum

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Introduction

• ExamSoft is fast becoming a popular platform for delivering exams.1
• Although there are many advantages to using ExamSoft over paper based exams, it should be noted that students may not always prefer taking their exams using an electronic interface.
• A number of determinants could factor into their disposition including stress and anxiety during exams, familiarity with technology, preference for paper based exams etc.
• Previous studies had shown that both perceived ease of use and attitude towards usage can significantly influence on predicted future use.2
• The main objective of this project was to evaluate student perception of using ExamSoft following its use during two semesters in selected classes in the first and second year of a pharmacy school curriculum.

Methods

• ExamSoft was piloted in three, first (P1) and four, second (P2) professional year classes in the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) curriculum at the James L. Winkle College of Pharmacy during the academic year 2015/2016.
• To prepare students for using ExamSoft, an information session was held followed by a mock examination to facilitate familiarity with the software.
• Other classes in these professional years continued to use paper based methods for exams and quizzes.
• Voluntary, anonymous surveys were administered assessing different aspects of user satisfaction, comfort with the technology, overall experience, and individual experiences on test day with the ExamSoft platform.
• The initial survey consisted of a total of 29 questions while the subsequent survey consisted of a total of 21 questions. Both surveys included multiple choice, open ended and Likert scale type questions.
• This research project was approved by the IRB at the University of Cincinnati.

Conclusions

• Our results suggest that majority of students have high stress and anxiety levels prior to taking exams and ExamSoft heightened their stress and anxiety levels. However, the added stress with ExamSoft decreased over time.
• Our results also seem to suggest that although majority of students preferred paper based exams over ExamSoft initially, many students became more comfortable using ExamSoft platform over time. This could be due to decrease in stress over exams, better administration methods and overall comfort with the process of taking exams using ExamSoft.
• This is also reflected in the high percentage of students that would recommend ExamSoft for the future. In addition, the majority of students also thought that the College of Pharmacy should permanently adopt ExamSoft to be used as a test taking platform.
• However, our results are limited as the surveys assess the students overall experience of using ExamSoft across multiple subjects and hence does not evaluate each subject individually.
• It is worth noting that ExamSoft may perhaps be better suited for certain subjects/types of questions more so than others.

References