Purpose: Competence is bound to context, yet the environment is seldom explicitly considered in assessments. We explored 1) faculty and residents’ perspectives of the environment during internal medicine clinical teaching unit (CTU) rotations, 2) the extent to which faculty and residents accounted for environmental factors in their assessments, and 3) the relationship between environmental factors and assessments.

Methods: From July 2014 to June 2015 residents (n=174) and faculty (n=54) across 6 teaching hospitals at one university rated their CTU environment using a novel Practice Environment Rating Scale (PERS) matched by rotation block and hospital site over 12 rotations. PERS data were paired to faculty In-Training Evaluation Reports (ITERs) of residents supervised during the block, and to residents’ Resident Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness (RATE) scores of the same faculty. Differences between perception and impact on assessment were tested using ANOVAs and correlations, respectively.

Results: Residents rated the CTU environment more positively than faculty (3.91/5 vs. 3.29, p<0.001, d=0.5). Residents were less likely to take environmental factors into account when assessing faculty (2.70/5), than vice-versa (3.40, p<0.0001, d=1.2). On sub-scales of the PERS, residents’ ratings of Busyness correlated negatively with RATE scores of faculty (r=-0.23, p=0.0001); conversely, faculty’s ratings of Busyness did not correlate with ITER scores of residents. Faculty overall PERS scores significantly correlated with ITER scores for the non-medical expert CanMEDs roles (r=0.23, p<0.01).

Discussion/Conclusions: Residents and faculty perceived the same environment differently; these perceptions had small but significant effects on assessment. The busier the rotation seemed to residents, the lower they rated their faculty, although causality cannot be determined from this study. The relationship between faculty’s PERS ratings and their residents’ ITERs was harder to interpret, potentially because faculty accounted for environmental factors when assessing residents, diminishing their effect. Understanding the interplay between context and assessment is essential to developing valid judgements about competence.

Level of Audience: Mid-career
Focus of Presentation: GME

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