Simple Check List for Making Test Item

Sun Huh

Institute of Medical Education, Hallym University, Chuncheon, Korea

When medical teachers make an test item for medical classes, the commonly found errors are: violation of the “off the option” rule, reverse sequence of the clinical situation, and a violation of a “one best answer” question, such as the K-type (complex item format). The “off the option” rule means that examiners should be able to answer without options. For example, a negative sentence stem or a “which is the best answer” question without any cases or data is not possible to answer without options.

A reverse sequence item means that the question does not keep the naturally occurring sequence of the clinical situation. If a patient visits doctor and complains of cough, the doctor usually suspects respiratory diseases, takes a history, and performs a physical examination and

other diagnostic procedures to detect the cause of the cough. In this situation, the patient does not ask the doctor, “My disease is tuberculosis; do you know what my major complaint is?” The question should be, “What is the next step to diagnose or manage the patient?” A reverse sequence question is the former item.

K-type items should not be presented to medical students. This kind of item has already been excluded from the Korean Medical Licensing Examination, because it is the “true or false” type. Only A-type and R-type are presented now [1].

To remove these three commonly found errors and better prepare items that can be presented in clinical situations, I propose a simple checklist for item preparation (Table 1). I hope that it is used commonly to design items. Please check if the item is suitable for the content: If “Yes,” mark 1, and if “No,” mark 0. Add the total score. If total score is less than eight, please revise stem and/or options so that the item format improves.

Table 1. Simple Check List for Item Preparation

Content	No.				
	1	2	3	4	5
1 Is the level of item interpretation or problem-solving?					
2 Are the phenomena, observation, experiment, case or multimedia included?					
3 Is an answer possible without options?					
4 Is the item written as a positive sentence?					
5 Is number of options five if it is an A-type item?					
6 Is it a “one best answer” item, such as A-type or R-type?					
7 Are the options organized on equal levels or in equal categories?					
8 Are the lengths of options similar? If not, are they arranged from short to long?					
Total score					

REFERENCES

National Health Personnel Licensing Examination Board. Item Terminology [Internet]. Seoul (KR): National Health Personnel Licensing Examination Board; 2010 [cited 2010 Feb 14]. Available from: <http://kuksiwon.or.kr/>.

Korean J Med Educ 2010 Mar; 22(1): 71.
doi: 10.3946/kjme.2010.22.1.71.

© The Korean Society of Medical Education.
All rights reserved.