

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Exam coaching and UMAT

Dr Barbara Griffin (Conjoint) and Professor Ian Wilson from the School of Medicine are collaborating with Associate Professors Sally Carless and Margot Story and Dr Margaret Hay from Monash University to investigate the effects of coaching students prior to them undertaking their Undergraduate Medical and Health Science Admission Test (UMAT). This research is funded by the Undergraduate Medical and Health Science Admission Test Consortium.

'Most students intending to undertake a medical, dental or professional health science degree program at universities that are part of the UMAT Consortium are required to sit an Undergraduate Medical and Health Science Admission Test' explains Dr Griffin. 'Although the UMAT was originally introduced to overcome biases thought to be inherent in school grades, the growth of the student coaching industry has become a threat to the integrity of the UMAT, which may itself now be biased against those who cannot access coaching. Apart from potentially altering the rank order of candidates, coaching is important because it may change the anticipated validity of the test, affecting the fairness to all applicants if unpredicted outcomes occur.'

The researchers will investigate how coaching moderates the relationship between UMAT scores and scores from selection methods, personality, and academic achievement. The effect of coaching on the anticipated validity of UMAT scores for academic success during the medical degree will also be examined. Approximately 200 secondary students over a two year period from Years 11 and 12 from NSW and Victorian schools who intend to apply for entry into an undergraduate medical or dental degree will be tested for this study.

The students will undertake validated psychometric tests and have these scores and their university



entry scores analysed against standardised UMAT data. Analyses of UMAT scores and academic results of undergraduate medical students will also be undertaken to see if the academic results are any different to what was predicted by the UMAT scores.

The findings will assist in ensuring the fairness of the Undergraduate Medical and Health Science Admission Test for selection purposes benefiting not only applicants but university medical schools who will gain a better understanding of how best to use the UMAT scores.

Project Title: Threats to the Validity and Reputation of the UMAT

Funding has been set at: \$60,000

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January 2011