**Authentic assessment at a distance: Critical assessment and redesign of media reports of pharmacology advances by an off-campus student cohort**

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**Introduction.** Although the internet permits virtually instantaneous updates on novel medical treatments, it is often challenging to separate fact from hyperbole. Medical misinformation has negative effects on everything from medication compliance to national economics, and erodes confidence in science and research. With the range of career opportunities expanding far beyond traditional avenues, pharmacology graduates are well-placed to provide an evidence-based, accessible, and engaging approach to media reports about therapeutic innovations.

**Aims**. To introduce students to potential disconnects between published research and media reports; develop their ability to critically assess these reports; use their acquired skills to redesign a media report of a recent pharmacology advance as a video presentation with a focus on how drugs work in a manner suitable for a lay audience.

**Methods**. Second-year students enrolled in a wholly online unit (subject), Pharmacology for Research, were provided with pairs of newspaper reports of recent drug discoveries and the associated journal articles. Students chose a single set to critique, were assigned a partner, and were provided with criteria which to assess the two components. In an online workshop, a news producer for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation discussed approaches to, and expectations for news reports, particularly how teams of reporters and scientifically trained staff collaborate. Students were then guided through a short critical assessment exemplar, to ensure that they had a firm grasp on the expectations of the written portion of the task. For the second part of the task, students were given a very recent news report about a new treatment drug, and were instructed to create a follow-up short news video.

**Results.** Overwhelmingly, students enjoyed the task, particularly the opportunity to *“take apart”* the news reports and be creative with the video. Even students initially uneasy about appearing on camera indicated that they enjoyed the chance to role play. The primary negative feedback was that they wanted the video to be longer and therefore, for the assessment task to have a higher weighting.

**Discussion.** This assessment task fostered critical thinking and creativity in the context of preventing medical misinformation. The combination of activities makes this task both authentic and a contribution to the graduate attributes that increase employability of pharmacology graduates.