

# The Candidate Perspective of the CCT

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# Background

- Concerns over the poor validity and reliability of other clinical assessment formats led to the introduction of OSCE-style exams<sup>1</sup>
- Allows a broad range of skills to be assessed<sup>2</sup>
- But – complex, costly, logistically challenging<sup>3</sup>
- Educational impact has been debated: Pros & Cons<sup>4</sup>

# Rationale for Research

- CCT introduced by ICGP in 2015
- With the CKT and MEQ part of an integrated triangulated assessment
- High stakes – exiting exam
- Similar in structure and format to CSA of MRCGP
- CSA researched regarding ethnicity,<sup>5</sup> gender,<sup>6</sup> examiner bias<sup>7</sup> and training of role-players<sup>8</sup>
- Perspective of Candidate?

# Aim of Research

Evaluate the CCT from the candidate's perspective, in order to gain an insight into their views of its,

- Fairness
- Relevance &
- Acceptability

# Methods

## Mixed Methods Approach

1. Focus groups with Candidates

1. Survey of Candidates

# Focus Groups

- Convenience sampling
- Cork GP Training Scheme
- Candidates who had undertaken the CCT
- Semi-structured interview
- Facilitated by researcher
- Transcribed and analysed for themes

# Survey

- Informed by focus group findings
- 50-item survey – piloted and finalised
- Mix of Likert-scale and open questions – qualitative feedback
- Link to survey e-mailed to summer 2017 CCT candidates, 2 days after exam
- Reminder e-mail 1 week later
- Quantitative analysis: LIME platform<sup>9</sup>
- Qualitative feedback analysed by 2 researchers

# Results

## Focus Groups

- 2 focus groups
- 9 participants
- All had undertaken/passed the CCT
- 1 face-to-face  
(n=5, 43 mins),
- 1 telephone  
(n=4, 37 mins)

## Emergent Themes

- Fairness
- Relevance
- Organisation
- Authenticity
- Stress
- Cost
- Time
- Educational impact



# Results: Survey

- E-mailed to 134 candidates
- 94 responses
- 11 responses incomplete - excluded
- Effective response rate of 83/134 (62%)

# Survey: Candidate demographic

Variable		Frequency n (%)
Gender	Female	60 (72.3%)
	Male	23 (27.7%)
Age/years	25	1 (1.2%)
	26-30	36 (43.4%)
	31-35	28 (33.7%)
	36-40	11 (13.3%)
	41-45	5 (6%)
	46-50	2 (2.4%)
Location completed undergraduate medial training	Ireland	72 (86.7%)
	UK	5 (6%)
	Hungry	1 (1.2%)
	Latvia	1 (1.2%)
	Poland	1 (1.2%)
	Pakistan	1 (1.2%)
	Not specified	2 (2.4%)
English as a first language	Yes	78(94%)
	No	5 (6%)

# Fairness & Relevance

*'So yeah I thought it was all very fair and representative of real life, yeah'. [FG1P5]*

*'We were definitely thinking, "am I trying to be tricked" and you were missing something' [FG1P5]*

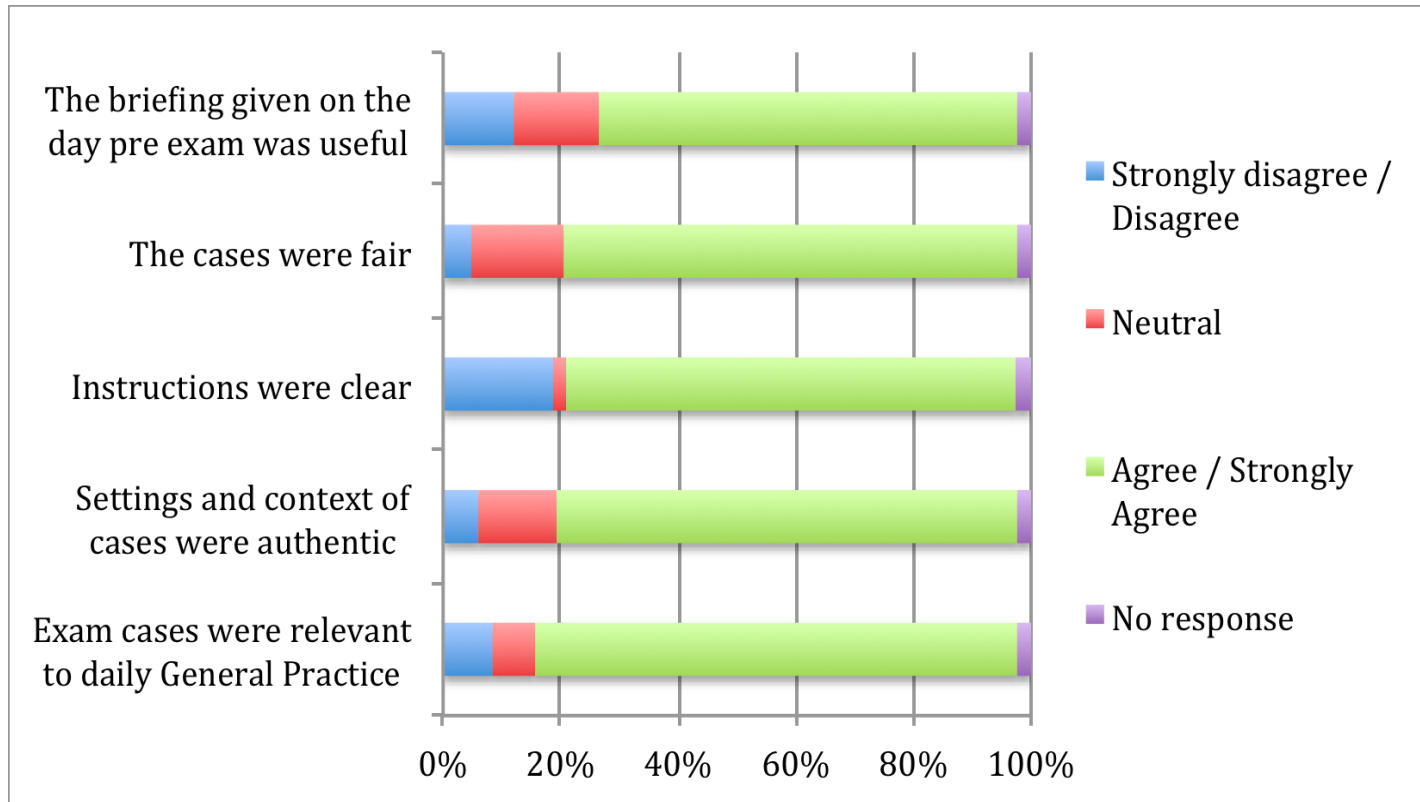


Figure 1: Fairness and relevance of the CCT

# Exam Preparation

*'You learn from people you study with too, you pick up on things, on how they consult, which is nice.'* [FG2P3]

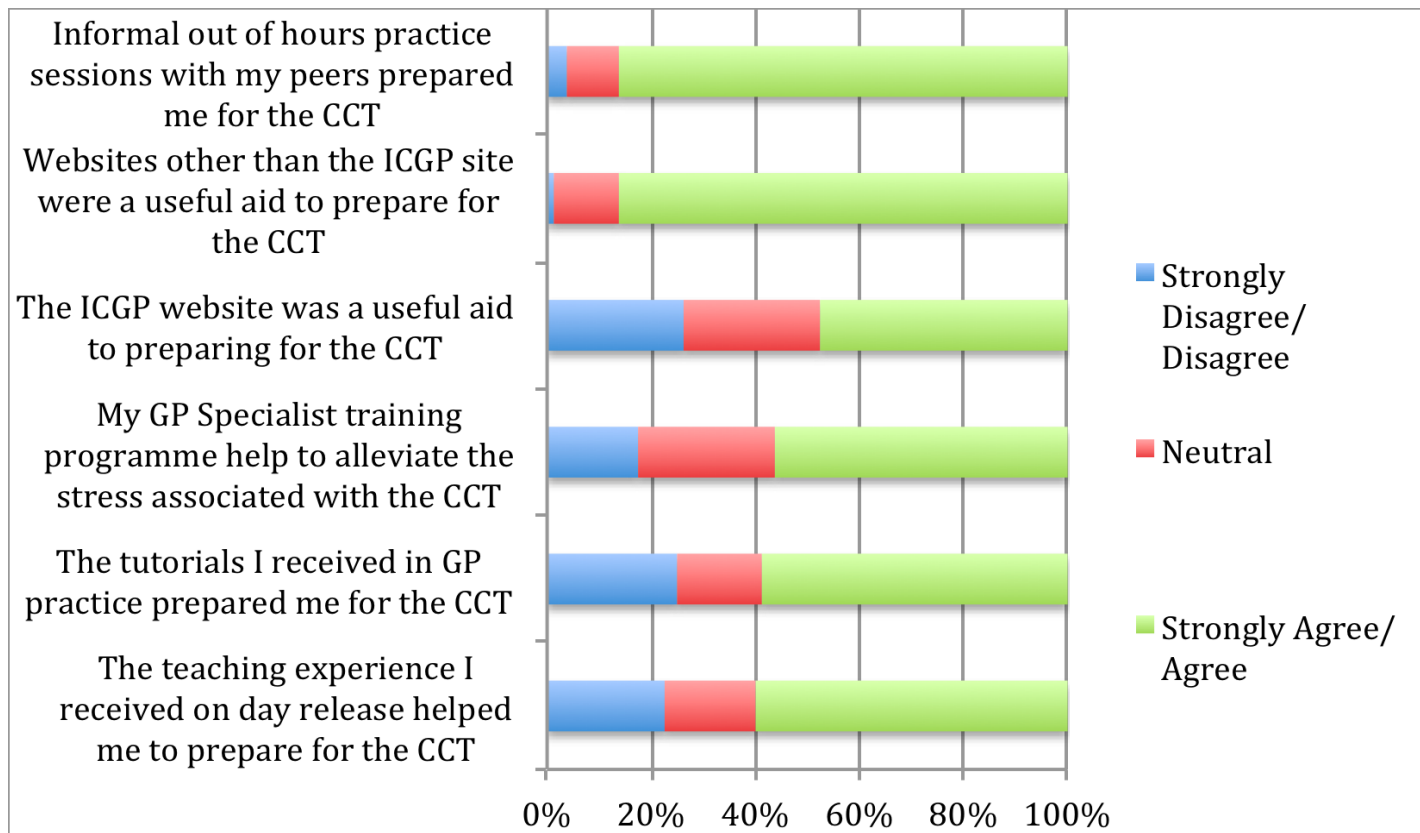


Figure 2: Exam preparation

# Organisation



*'It was like clockwork it was very well run. They did a very good job'* [FG2P1]

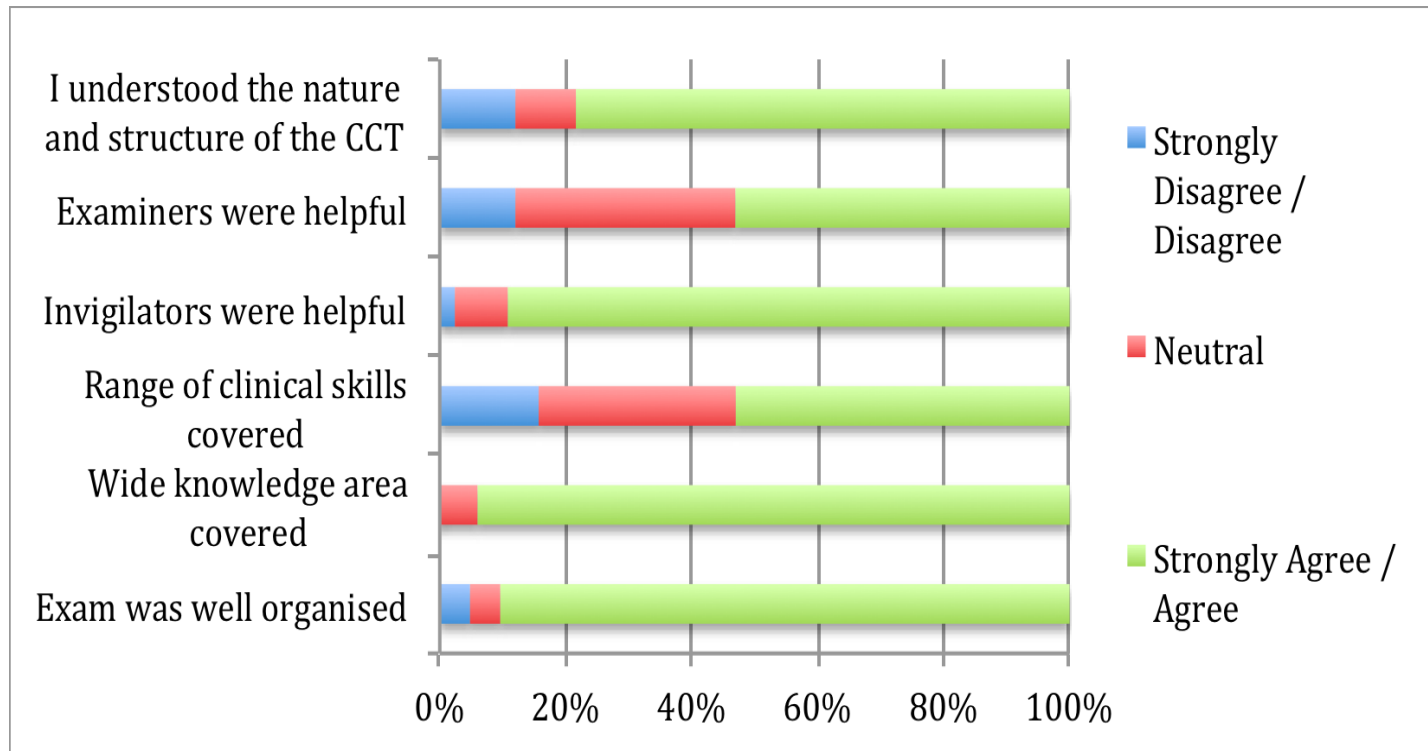


Figure 3: Organisation of the exam

# Stress

*'I found the situation to be very challenging and intimidating...  
In reality, these are the real challenges of general practice' [Q]*

*'Looking for prescription paper in an unfamiliar environment and  
having a pile of unfamiliar pieces of paper, added unnecessary  
stress to an already stressful situation' [Q]*

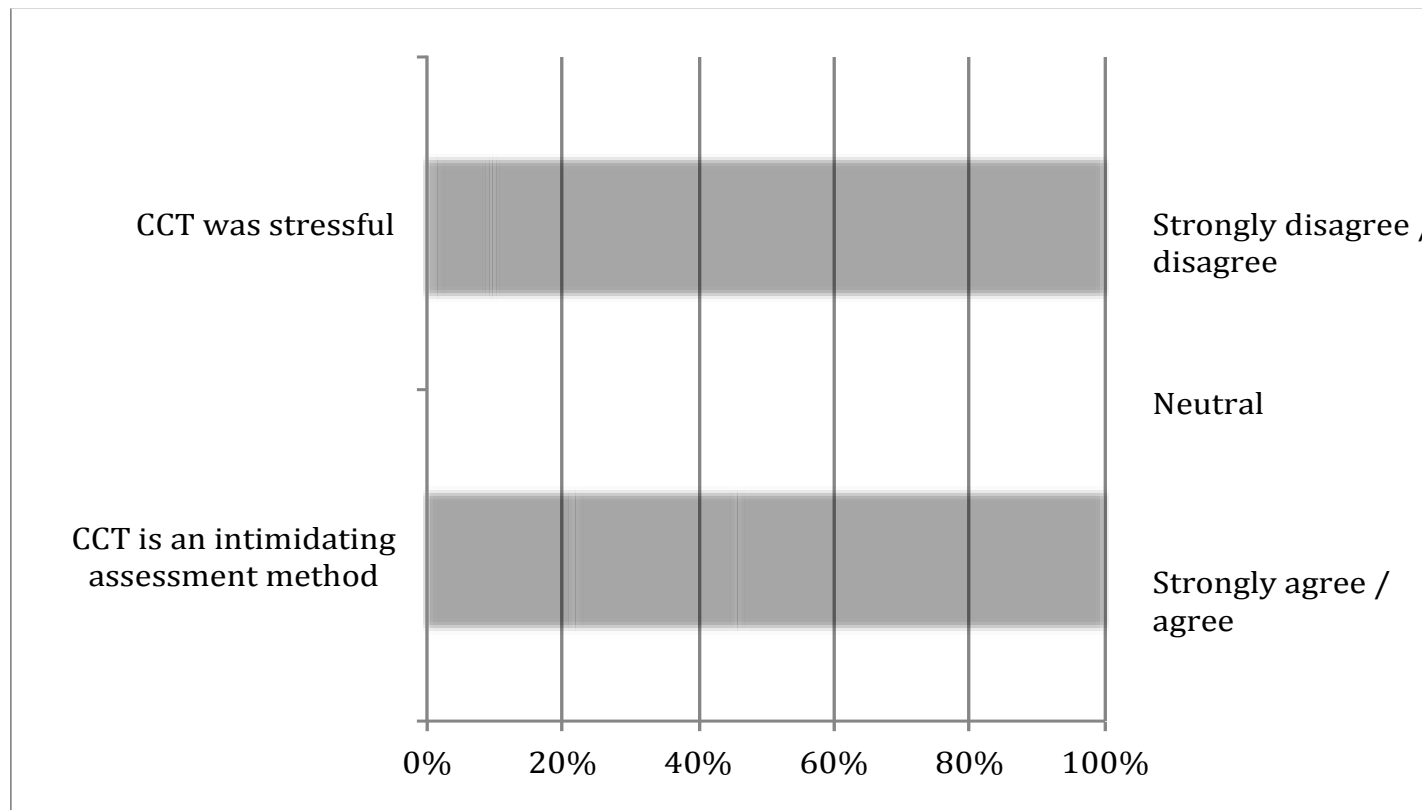


Figure 4: Stress

# Educational Impact

*'I think it makes you more conscious of consultation skills' [FG1P3]*

*'Afterwards even though I was nervous about the result I felt like I was better for doing the exam' [FG2P3]*

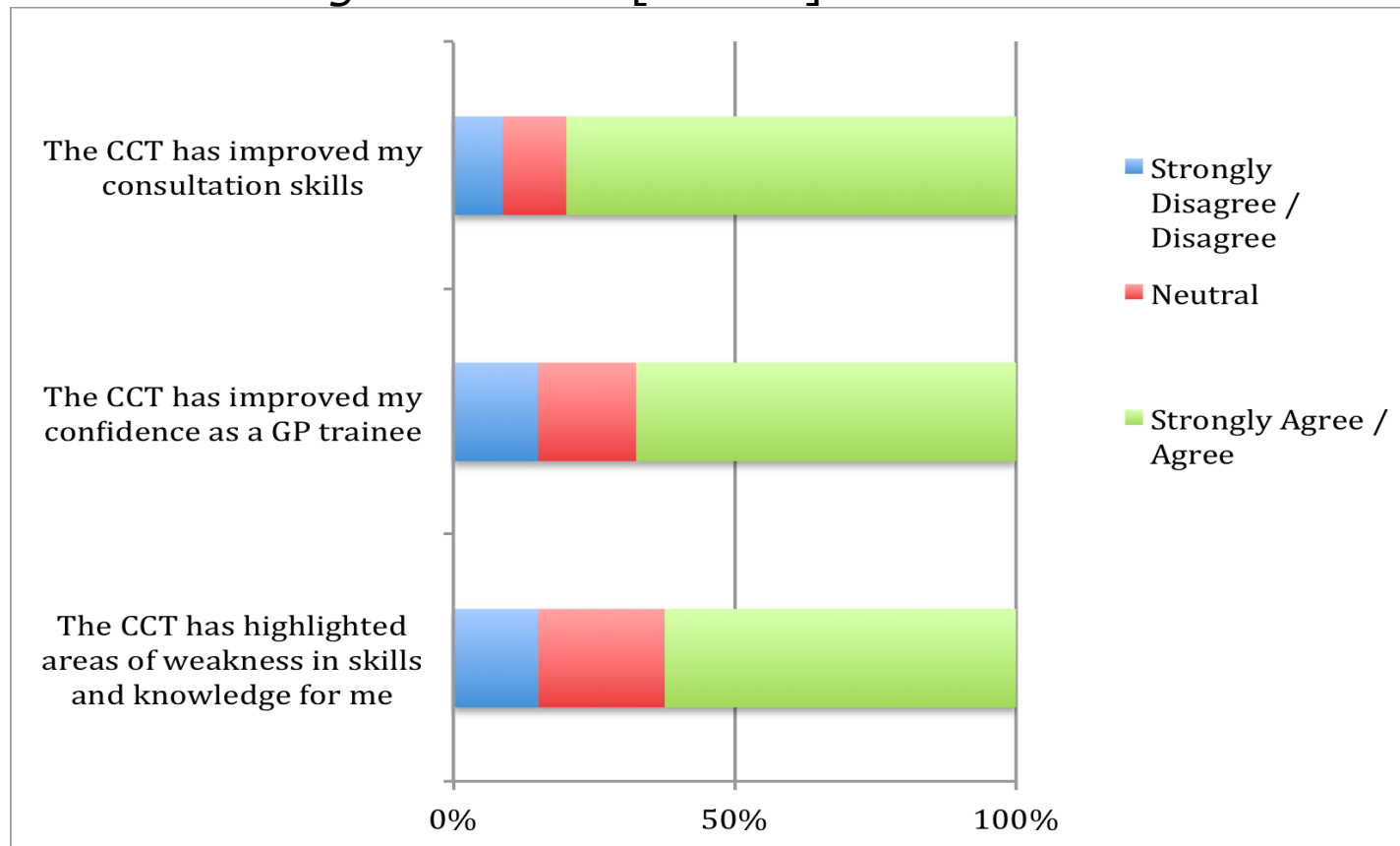


Figure 5: Educational impact

# Authenticity: Examiners & Actors

*'I felt the same, I thought they (examiners) were very discreet, I barely noticed them...They were like ghosts just coming in and out and I think that just allowed us to focus on the task at hand'*  
[FG1P2]

*'Some examiners were friendly, others were very blunt and unfriendly, they wouldn't even look at you. This is somewhat off putting. They could at least acknowledge your existence. Some of them never even said goodbye'* [Q]

*'You genuinely would just think that they (actors) were just patients sitting in front of you'*  
[FG1P2]



# Timing of Cases

66.3% felt 10 minutes was too short for the consultation

*'I know it is a test of time management but 10 minutes is too short a time'* [Q]

&

*'In real life many of us write our referral letters after the consultation or later in the day when we have more time, so that we can keep up with appointments'* [Q]

# Cost

68% disagreed that the cost of sitting the CCT exam was reasonable

*'The cost to the candidate is too much upfront, waiting for reimbursement can be frustrating and seems pointless, money going round in circles essentially'* [Q]

89% agreed that the full cost should be reimbursed

*'I think it is outrageous that we don't get fully refunded, that a good chunk of it has to come from our own pocket'* [FG1P1]

*'I can appreciate a lot of time and hard work was invested in creating a professional, comfortable exam environment'* [Q]

&

*'You can see where the money went there'* [FG1P3]

# Discussion

Candidates deem the CCT to be

- fair, acceptable, relevant to daily practice
- run efficiently, with accomplished role-players and unobtrusive, if not overly helpful examiners

However concern was raised about the financial & psychological impact of the exam

- perceived case complexity and time management restrictions

Broad acceptance that participation in the CCT had a positive educational impact

# How findings fits in

- Echoes findings from reviews of students' perception of other OSCE-style exam; positively regarded,<sup>10</sup> comprehensive,<sup>11</sup> reflective of daily practice<sup>12</sup>
- Stress - concurs with previous studies of other OSCE-style exams.<sup>10,13</sup>
- Broad dissatisfaction regarding the financial cost of sitting the CCT. Currently it costs €1300 to sit the CCT, while a refund of €900 is available to candidates after their first sitting of the exam.

# Study limitations

- Brief focus groups
- 1 focus group via teleconference – lack of non-verbal cues<sup>14</sup>
- Potential for participant bias
  - Focus group participant bias – all had passed the CCT
  - Survey participant bias – socially desirable responses
- Potential for researcher bias
  - Research team part of ICGP exams committee

# Conclusions

Novel study from CCT/CSA perspective

The CCT is considered to be a fair, relevant & acceptable exam that has a positive educational impact

Recommendations;

- Be cognisant of the significant financial & emotional stress felt by candidates
- Consider efforts to minimize stress, by making the structure and process of the exam as clear and explicit as possible
- Develop further supporting material for CCT candidates needs

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