CAN WE TEACH PROFESSIONALISM IN MEDICAL SCHOOL?

“Troubleshooting Your Clerkship 103”
Association for Surgical Education Meeting 4/21/13

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Objectives

- Describe attributes of medical professionalism
- Assess whether institutional environment encourages professional behavior
- Develop novel methods of teaching and assessing professionalism in medical students (and residents)
Medical Professionalism

“The habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served.”

### Competency: Professionalism

**Goal:** To demonstrate commitment to professional responsibilities, adherence to ethical principles, and sensitivity to diverse patient populations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates sensitivity and responsiveness to diverse patient attributes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates respect and concern for the welfare of patients.</td>
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<td>Demonstrates appropriate behavior and conduct.</td>
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<td>Demonstrates a commitment to ethical principles including those pertaining</td>
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<td>to provision or withholding of care, confidentiality of patient information,</td>
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<td>and informed consent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaves reliably and with accountability in performing duties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaves honestly and with integrity with regard to duties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presents appropriate appearance and demeanor.</td>
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<td>Displays insight and reflection in assessment of self, including acknowledgement of strengths and recognition of limitations in knowledge and skills.</td>
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<td>Incorporates constructive feedback to enhance performance.</td>
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<td>Pursues self-directed learning.</td>
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Reality

- We see **conduct**, not professionalism
  - Texting during rounds
  - Snoozing during conferences
  - Unavailable/tardy
  - Unkempt appearance
  - Passivity, even boredom
  - Plagiarism (EMR)
  - Lying
  - NOT following rules
  - ETC.

**Markers** of unprofessional behavior
Attributes of Professionalism

- AAMC Medical School Learning Objectives
  - **Knowledgeable** (scientific method, biomedicine)
  - **Skillful** (clinical reasoning skills, reasoning, communications)
  - **Altruistic** (respect, compassion, honesty, COI avoidance)
  - **Dutiful** (population health, advocacy, outreach, health system mgmt.)
Physician Charter (ABIM)

Commitments:

- Professional competence
- Professional responsibilities
- Patient confidentiality
- Improving quality of care
- Appropriate relationships

- Scientific knowledge
- Managing COIs
- Honesty with patients
- Improving access to care
- Just distribution of finite resources.

Importance

- Development of the personal beliefs, values and role expectations that guide and inform virtually all subsequent behavior
- Medical board disciplinary action strongly associated with unprofessional medical school behavior
  - Students described as:
    - Irresponsible
    - Unresponsive to critique

Disciplinary Action by Medical Boards and Prior Behavior in Medical School
Papadakis, et al. NEJM 2005;353:2673-82
Challenges

- Medical school admission criteria emphasizing MCAT scores and GPA
- 80 hour work week restrictions limiting educational encounters
- Increased faculty pressure to perform clinically
- “Hidden curriculum”
Hidden Curriculum

Through observations of role models’ actions, students learn behaviors and ways of being that look successful to them in the light of their own goals and experience and the rewards present in the environment.
Hidden Curriculum

Students tend to internalize and perpetuate the patterns of behavior that surround them—the way they see people treating each other and the way they themselves are treated.

Toward an Informal Curriculum that Teaches Professionalism
Hidden Curriculum

• Students see:
  • Disrespect
  • Bias
  • Barriers to communication
  • Disruptive behavior

• While many medical students enter school altruistic and social minded they progressively become more self-centered and cynical
### Table 6. The Struggle to Stay Centered on Values in the Profession of Medicine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal</th>
<th>Foundational Value</th>
<th>Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based</td>
<td>Truth/Science</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COI (confluence)</td>
<td>Therapeutic Alliance</td>
<td>COI (conflict)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring, healing</td>
<td>Curing</td>
<td>Risk-harming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open heart/mind</td>
<td>Accepting, Empathic</td>
<td>Arrogant, unmoved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error-free</td>
<td>Right action</td>
<td>Mistake-prone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Hassled, knee-jerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sacrificing</td>
<td>Altruistic</td>
<td>Avaricious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Flag in the Wind: Educating for Professionalism in Medicine**
Inui, T.S., AAMC 2/2003
Hidden Curriculum

Solutions:

- Institutional change
  - Implementation of meaningful “Code of Ethics”
  - Leadership development linked to professional values/behavior
  - Consequences for poor behavior

- Develop informal curriculum that reinforces values
  - Identify struggles faced staying centered on values
  - Reflect upon/talk about interactions as they are taking place
  - Promote “mindfulness”
Can Professionalism be “taught”? 

- Body of knowledge that can be learned, but does that ensure professional behavior? 
- Probably not. 
- However, *professional socialization* can be taught or at least influenced.
“Teaching” Professionalism

• Institutional framework
  • Conduct code
  • Clerkship policies
  • Clear, consistent written /verbal communications

• Emphasizing professional behavior during conferences
  • Morbidity and Mortality Conference
Professionalism Instruction During Experiential Learning

- Establish explicit expectations
- Set high standards
- Treat students respectfully
- Frequent, timely, specific feedback
- Evaluation of professional behavior
  - Required for clerkship Pass/Honors
- Student feedback to site and preceptors
  - Teachable moments-what went well/not well
- Role modeling

Improving Student Professionalism During Experiential Learning  Hammer, D. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education 2006; 70(3) Article 59
“Teaching” Professionalism

- Early clinical experience
- Small group sessions
  - Critical incident evaluation - student choice of event
  - Case discussions
    - Emphasize relationships with patients, health care system, self
    - Group members reinforced values, empowered each other in reflective manner, provided peer assessment
- Reflective writing assignment, Portfolio

Exploring the hidden curriculum: a qualitative analysis of clerks' reflection on professionalism in surgical clerkship  Kittmer, et al. AJS 2013; 205;426-433
Encouraging Professionalism

- “White Coat” ceremony
- Professional oath-taking
- Arnold P. Gold Foundation
  - Humanism in Medicine Award
- University of Chicago
  - Faculty and Pre-Clinical Peer Role Model Awards
### Assessing Professionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demonstrates</th>
<th>Deficiency</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive/responsive to patients</td>
<td>Insensitive/appears uncomfortable, makes patient uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates respect/concern</td>
<td>Lack of interest, respect, compassion, empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate behavior, conduct</td>
<td>Immature/irresponsible, does not accept responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adheres to ethical principles re: providing care, confidentiality, informed consent</td>
<td>Lack of confidentiality, inadequate/inappropriate patient care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing Professionalism

- Reliable/accountable
- Behaves honestly with integrity
- Appropriate appearance, demeanor
- Accurate self-assessment, recognizes limitations
- Incorporates constructive feedback
- Pursues self-directed learning

- Unreliable/disruptive
- Dishonest, unable to cope with personal issues, attempts to cover up errors
- Inappropriate attire, passive, inattentive, disrespectful
- Lacks insight, does not recognize limits/seek help
- Defensive
- Not interested in self-learning
Discussion!