

Meeting the Core Competency of Professionalism in a Medical Ethics Curriculum Taught by Family Medicine Residents for Students

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Introduction

One of the seven Core Competencies of the Osteopathic Profession is Professionalism. This curriculum focuses on three aspects of professionalism – professional behaviors, understanding of ethical issues and skills as a teacher. This curriculum also attempts to define and assess professional behavior.

Rationale

We sought to design a curriculum that would meet multiple training objectives for professionalism in one course to maximize the use of limited resources.

Methodology

The residents participated in 2 1-hour workshops – one on medical ethics and one on facilitation skills and professional behaviors. They rated themselves on professional characteristics. See Table 1. They were also given a copy of the professionalism evaluation which students would complete. See Table 2.

Meanwhile, the medical students participated in a 3 hour didactic review of the basic concepts of medical ethics. The students selected 7 discussion topics from a list we had prepared of important ethical issues.

Each resident then facilitated 1 1-hour discussion of these topics by third year medical students. Each resident was evaluated on their professional behavior by the medical students at the end of the discussion.

Table 1.

**Self Evaluation of Professional Characteristics Scale definition:*

seldom – 1, some of the time – 2, more often than not – 3, most of the time - 4

<i>Altruism</i>	<i>Mode</i>
I apply sensitivity to patient's needs.	4
I take time and effort to explain information to patients.	3
I listen sympathetically to patient's concerns.	3
I put the patient's interest before my own.	4
I show respect for patient confidentiality.	4
<i>Duties</i>	
I complete assigned tasks timely and fully.	3
I fulfill obligations I have undertaken.	4
I take on appropriate share of team work.	4
I fulfill call duties.	4
I report accurately and fully on patient care activities.	3
I report mistakes to supervising physician.	4
<i>Self Improvement and Adaptability</i>	
I accept constructive feedback.	3
I recognize my own limitations and seek help when appropriate.	4
I incorporate feedback to change behavior.	3
I adapt well to changing circumstances.	4
I read on patient cases.	3
I attend rounds, seminar and other learning activities.	4
<i>Respect for Others</i>	
I am able to establish rapport with team members.	4
I maintain appropriate boundaries in work and learning situations.	4
I relate well to fellow students in learning	4
I relate well to interns and residents in learning environments.	4
I relate well to faculty in learning environments.	3
I relate well to other health care professionals in learning environments.	3
<i>Honor and Integrity</i>	
I refer to myself accurately with respect to qualifications.	4
I use professional language in discussion with patients and colleagues.	4
I respect the diversity of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, intelligence and socio-economic status.	4
I maintain appropriate boundaries with patients.	4
I dress in a professional manner.	4

n=7

Table 2.

Evaluation of Professional Traits/Behaviors of O'Bleness Memorial Hospital Residents during Ethics Education Competency: Professionalism

Please read each statement and circle the number that corresponds to your response (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree)

Reliability and Responsibility Average Rating

The facilitator:	
Can be depended upon to do his/her duty	4.77
Follows through on tasks agreed upon	4.77
Arrives on time for class/discussion	4.77

Maturity

The facilitator:	
Behaves respectfully	4.77
Accepts blame for failure	4.76
Makes appropriate demands	4.79

Critique and Feedback

The facilitator:	
Accepts criticism	4.69
Looks at self objectively	4.72
Takes steps to correct shortcomings	4.76
Provides specific and constructive feedback	4.69

Communication Skills

The facilitator:	
Listens well	4.83
Engages in effective facilitation behaviors	4.73
Effectively identifies ethical issues	4.75
Uses language appropriate to circumstances	4.75

Honesty and Integrity

The facilitator:	
Adheres to professional and/or ethical standards	4.83
Is honest	4.87
Corrects errors	4.86

What behaviors did the facilitator show that demonstrates professionalism (aside from the characteristics listed above)?

Her lovely smile and kind demeanor.	
Listens well.	
Letting all of us have our valid points.	

n=6

Results

The residents rated themselves highly on professional characteristics, with a mode of 3 or 4 on a scale of 4. Table 1.

The medical students rated the residents as exhibiting highly professional behaviors, with an average rating of 4.77 on a scale of 5 for all items. Table 2.

The average rating of the course by medical students was 4.7 on a scale of 1 to 5 (from strongly disagree to strongly agree).

The students identified 3 behaviors in addition to those listed that demonstrate professionalism: smiling, kind demeanor, and allowing different viewpoints. Table 2.

Discussion

The course met its objectives of :

- 1) Producing a curriculum that would meet multiple training objectives for professionalism in one course to maximize the use of limited resources;
- 2) Beginning to define the professional behaviors that make up professionalism; and
- 3) Developing 2 instruments for assessing professionalism.

In future courses, we will refine these two instruments.