

How Professionalism is Learned in Residency

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Learner Audience: Attendings and residents in anesthesiology.

Background: Professionalism in medicine is important because it affects patient care. In "Patient Perceptions of Professionalism: Implications for Residency Education", patients find the most important characteristics of professional residents to be: paying attention to their concerns, being compassionate, and speaking in understandable terms. Professionalism also includes collegiality, accountability, ethical behavior and care of self as delineated by Tetzaff. Teaching and learning these somewhat intangible skills is challenging.

In "The Teaching of Professionalism During Residency: Why it is Failing and a Suggestion to Improve its Success", it is emphasized that there is a didactic and a hidden curriculum from which residents obtain their future behaviors. The hidden curriculum sometimes includes faculty berating technicians, nurses or residents or not taking a patient seriously because of their nationality. Residents may learn professionalism better from group discussions and faculty can be assessed by resident evaluations.

When residents were asked to rate their attendings in "An Instrument Designed for Faculty Supervision Evaluation by Anesthesia Residents and its Psychometric Properties", 14% were found to be negative role models, however, 44% of the variance was from resident-instructor interaction. Therefore the current method of learning by example may not be effective for professionalism.

Needs Assessment: To assess if residents and faculty in a teaching program know the educational objectives of professionalism and how they are being learned/taught.

Hypothesis: Each clinical rotation in anesthesiology residency has professionalism objectives. These range in content and include punctuality, timely record keeping, confidentiality and respect of patients and colleagues. While these are emailed to each resident and are included on the resident website, it is possible that residents are not getting a formal education in professionalism and are learning by example or not at all.

Curriculum Design: 69 residents and 78 faculty members received a survey. The results from four months of 72 resident respondents and 24 faculty respondents have been examined.

Residents were asked if they knew the professionalism objectives of their current rotation. After answering they were able to see a drop down menu of the objectives and then were asked how they were taught the objectives by faculty. See Table 1.

Faculty were asked if they knew the professionalism objectives of their rotation. After answering they received a drop down menu of the objectives and then were asked how they taught them. See Table 2.

Outcome: Residents more than faculty (72% vs. 54%) felt they did not know the professionalism objectives. The majority of both residents and faculty (73 and 89%) felt they learned or taught professionalism by example most of the time or all of the time. Almost half of faculty (44%) felt they taught explicitly most of the time or all of the time compared to 9% of residents feeling they learned from explicit teaching. See Tables 1 and 2.

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| Table 1: Residents Professionalism Survey | % (# answered/ respondents) | | | | Mean |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|---------------------|
| Rotation Month | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | |
| Did not know objectives | 75 (27/36) | 65 (13/20) | 71.4 (5/7) | 77.8 (7/9) | 72.2 (52/72) |
| Learning/Teaching Method (most or all of the time): | | | | | |
| Explicit | 9.4 (3/32) | 5.3 (1/19) | 14.3 (1/7) | 12.5 (1/8) | 9 (6/66) |
| Negative Reinforcement | 6.3 (2/32) | 5.3 (1/19) | 0 (0/7) | 0 (0/8) | 4.5 (3/66) |
| Positive Reinforcement | 31.3 (10/32) | 31.6 (6/19) | 42.9 (3/7) | 37.5 (3/8) | 33.3 (22/66) |
| Example | 81.3 (26/32) | 68.4 (13/19) | 57.1 (4/7) | 62.5 (5/8) | 72.7 (48/66) |

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| Table 2: Attendings Professionalism Survey | % (# answered/ respondents) |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Did not know objectives | 54.2 (13/24) |
| Learning/Teaching Method (most or all of the time): | |
| Explicit | 44.4 (8/18) |
| Negative Reinforcement | 11.1 (2/18) |
| Positive Reinforcement | 50 (9/18) |
| Example | 88.9 (16/18) |

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References:

1. Filho, Getulio et al. "An Instrument Designed for Faculty Supervision Evaluation by Anesthesia Residents and its Psychometric Properties" *Anesthesia&Analgesia* 2008: 107/4: 1316-1322
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3. Tetzlaff, John. "Professionalism in Anesthesiology: "What is it?" or "I Know it When I See it" " *Anesthesiology* 2009: 110/4: 700-702
4. Wiggins, Michael et al. "Patient Perceptions of Professionalism: Implications for Residency Education" *Medical Education* 2009: 43: 28-33