Professionalism: Can We Assess Its Many Facets?

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Background

- Professionalism is a central component of physicians’ responsibility to patients and society. Yet professionalism is an evolving, multifaceted domain of competence.
- To measure professionalism in our learners, we need a variety of assessments that can capture the different facets of professionalism.
- As part of a larger curriculum development project, we designed a systematic literature review to describe assessments that capture 7 facets of professionalism.

Methods

- Our team conducted a customized search of:
  1. Existing Databases (i.e., DREAM)
  2. PubMed and key medical education journals (Academic Medicine, Medical Education, Medical Teacher, and Teaching and Learning in Medicine)
- We included English-language articles, abstracts, and dissertations reporting use of assessments that captured any one of 12 competencies, adapted from the ACGME and CanMEDS frameworks
- Targeted 7 broader facets of professionalism:
  1. patient respect
  2. prioritization of patient needs
  3. commitment to patient confidentiality
  4. commitment to patient autonomy
  5. commitment to ethical practice
  6. sensitivity and responsiveness to diversity
  7. commitment to professional competence.
- We documented purpose, which facets each assessment could measure, and whether psychometric data were reported, using citation tracking.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency*</th>
<th>n (% ) of 361 Identified</th>
<th>Example Assessment Identified</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychometric Evidence Available</td>
<td>262 (72.6%)</td>
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*Note: Many of these assessments cover more than one competency and are offered a single example of an instrument developed which offers some level of assessment of the related competency and provides psychometric evidence for consideration. These examples do not constitute verification of tool quality. Totals more than 100% reflect that instruments often assess multiple competencies.

Conclusions

- A large number of assessments on professionalism were identified with an overall high rate of psychometric evidence present.
- The lack of assessments measuring commitment to autonomy is particularly striking, given that autonomy is an essential principle of the American Board of Internal Medicine Physician Charter.
- The paucity of assessments capturing patient confidentiality is also concerning, given confidentiality’s central place in the patient-physician relationship and the legal ramifications of confidentiality breaches.
- This project is limited by the use of one competency framework as there are similarities/differences with existing frameworks (ACGME, CanMEDS, AAMC, etc.).