Assessing Professionalism: Definitions

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Defining Professionalism

• Disclosures:
  – None
Defining Professionalism?

“There are certain words that do not admit of tight definitions.”

Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics”, 350 BC

Definition changing over time
- cultural influences
- technology
Defining Professionalism?

• “...faced with the task of trying to define what may be indefinable”
  – “…but I know it when I see it.”
  – Potter Stewart

• Jacobellis v. Ohio  1964
Professionalism-Past Virtues and Ethics

- Code of Hammurabi 1754 BC
  - "If a surgeon performs a major operation on an 'awelum' (nobleman), with a lancet and caused the death of this man, they shall cut off his hands".
  - Patient consent
  - Scaled fee schedule for surgical services, which was linked to the outcome of the surgery

Medical Professionalism Best Practices. AOA Medical Society, 2017
Professionalism-Past

- Hippocrates (275 AD), Maimonides (1180 AD)
  - Medical practice as sacred trust of the physician to protect and care for the patient
  - Medical practice as a social contact or covenant
  - “Do no harm.” (non-maleficence)
  - Primacy of the patient’s interests
    - Respect for privacy
    - Respect for human life
  - Duty to share knowledge

Medical Professionalism Best Practices. AOA Medical Society, 2017
Professionalism-Past

- Manchester Infirmary Rules 1755
  - Recognized shared responsibilities in complex environment
- AMA code of medical ethics 1847
  - Obligations to patients, colleagues, community
  - Primacy of patient’s interests
  - Competence
  - Guarding of public’s health
Professionalism-Present
Behaviors and Competencies

- Measurement of behaviors — Performance
  - Milestones
  - Communication skills
  - Documentation of professional behaviors
    - Hand washing
    - Coding and billing/EHR documentation
    - Responding to requests, pages, emails
  - Regular assessments by faculty, leaders
Professionalism-Future
Professional Identity Development

• Emphasis on acquiring values, habits, behaviors of aspirational medical practice

• Role modeling and behavior – with instruction-leading to incorporation of professionalism ideals. Motivational.

• Incorporates virtues and socialization into the medical community with competency models. Teamwork.
Definitions

• 2004 Drs. Richard and Sylvia Cruess (McGill Univ)
  – “…work based upon the mastery of a complex body of knowledge and skills.
  – Members governed by codes of ethics and profess a commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism, promotion of the public good
  – basis of a social contract, granting the profession autonomy and self-regulation. ..Accountable to those served and to society.

ABMS 2012

• “belief system about how best to organize and deliver health care, which calls on group members to jointly declare (“profess”) what the public and individual patients can expect regarding shared competency standards and ethical values, and to implement trustworthy means to ensure that all medical professionals live up to these promises.”

Ethics and Professionalism Committee--ABMS Professionalism Work Group
The Physician Charter – ABIM Foundation* 2005

• Fundamental Principles
  – Primacy of patient welfare
    • Altruism
  – Patient autonomy
    • Empower patients to make informed decisions about their treatment
  – Social justice
    • Eliminate discrimination
    • Fairly distribute health care resources

* With the ACP, European Federation of Internal Medicine
The Physician Charter – ABIM Foundation 2005

• Professional Responsibilities
  – professional competence
  – honesty with patients
  – patient confidentiality
  – maintaining appropriate relations with patients.
  – improving quality of care
  – just distribution of finite resources
  – scientific knowledge
  – maintaining trust by managing conflicts of interest
  – professional responsibilities