



# “Professionalism”

## OUHSC Educational Grand Rounds

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# Professionalism



- Why are we paying so much attention to professionalism?
- What is it? Can we define it?
- Can it be taught?
- Can we assess it?
- Focus on “medicine” but the issues are applicable to all health professions



## Defining a “Profession”



- I believe there are four cardinal elements, each with significant implications:
  - Specialized body of knowledge and skills
  - Service to mankind
  - Code of behavior or ethics
  - Special privileges granted by society



## Medical Professionalism Project



- American Board of Internal Medicine Foundation
- American College of Physicians Foundation
- European Federation of Internal Medicine
- “Charter on Medical Professionalism”



## Professionalism



- Professionalism is the basis of medicine's contract with society.
- Fundamental Principles
  - Primacy of patient welfare
  - Patient autonomy
  - Social justice



## Professional Responsibilities



- Commitment to professional competence
- Commitment to honesty with patients
- Commitment to patient confidentiality
- Commitment to maintaining appropriate relations with patients
- Commitment to improving quality of care



- Commitment to improving access to care
- Commitment to a just distribution of finite resources
- Commitment to scientific knowledge
- Commitment to maintaining trust by managing conflicts of interest
- Commitment to professional responsibilities



## Physicians



- Subordinate their own interests to the interests of patients.
- Adhere to high ethical and moral standards.
- Respond to society's needs.
- Believe in and demonstrate core values of honesty, integrity, caring and compassion, altruism and empathy, respect for others, and trustworthiness.



## Physicians



- Exercise accountability for themselves and for their colleagues.
  - This means self-regulation of the profession



## Critical concepts



- Implicit in the relative autonomy granted to a profession is that its members will set and enforce standards of practice.
- Demonstrating true accountability is the key to maintaining the privilege of autonomy that medicine has enjoyed.



## Critical Concepts



- The basis for the public's trust in a profession to self-regulate is the profession's fundamental responsibility to be concerned first and foremost with the public good.



## Self-regulation of the profession involves



- Self-monitoring by the profession
- Self-discipline by the profession



## Self-regulation responsibilities



- Collective
  - Codes of Conduct
  - Practice guidelines
  - Peer review
  - Medical staff actions
  - Medical societies
  - Specialty certification boards
  - Standards – educational and practice



## Self-regulation responsibilities



- Individual



## Collective Self-Regulation Successes



- Medical education standards
- Residency training standards
- Specialty certification standards
- Licensing standards - USMLE



## Self-regulation problems



- Impaired physicians
- Incompetent physicians
- Unethical physicians



## Self-regulation problems



- Impairment
  - Alcohol abuse and addiction
  - Drug abuse and addiction
  - Diseases that cause functional impairment
  - Mental health disorders that compromise judgment or behavior



## Self-regulation problems



- Incompetence
  - Knowledge
  - Judgment
  - Psychomotor skills
  - Communication
  - Failure to recognize limitations



## Self-regulation problems



- Unethical behavior
  - Falsification of patient examination
  - Falsification of medical records
  - Abusing patients
  - Billing fraud and abuse
  - Financial conflicts of interest in patient care
  - False advertising and “quackery”
  - Failure to obtain informed consent



## Self-regulation problems



- Unethical behavior
  - Falsifying research results
  - Plagiarism
  - Financial conflicts of interest in research outcomes
  - Cheating on examinations



## Professionalism



- Can it be taught?
  - Discussion



## Teaching Professionalism



- Brownell AKW and Cote L. Senior residents' views on the meaning of professionalism and how they learn about it. *Acad Med* 2001;76:734-737.
  - Three most common attributes identified: respect, competence, empathy
  - Learn the most about professionalism from observing role models



## Professionalism



- Can we assess it?
  - Discussion



## Assessing Professionalism



- Evaluation by faculty supervisors
- Scales to rate professionalism by nurses and patients
- Peer evaluation?
- Standardized patients?
- Clinical vignettes used to elicit responses
- Longitudinal observations
- Others



- Are there predictive measures for professionalism?
- Have we been clear about expected behaviors?
- Are we assessing professionalism or personality?



## Professionalism

Our fundamental contract  
with society and with ourselves