

Students views on being a 'good' doctor versus a 'professional' doctor

14 May 2014, by David Stacey



(Medical Xpress)—In light of previous research which found that medical students valued compassion, patient-centred care and communication skills over clinical competence and knowledge, new research has sought to further explore medical students' views on professionalism.

Forty-nine [medical students](#) took part in 13 focus groups conducted by researchers from The University of Western Australia based at the Rural Clinical School of Western Australia and the School of Medicine and Pharmacology.

Differences between students' understandings of the 'good' and 'professional' doctor were observed. Being competent, a good communicator and a good teacher were the main characteristics of the 'good' doctor. Professionalism was strongly associated with the adoption of a professional persona; following a code of practice and professional guidelines, and treating others with respect were also associated with the 'professional' doctor.

Lead author Dr Beatriz Cuesta-Briand said the

results published in BMC Medical Education suggest students felt more connected to the notion of the 'good' doctor and perceived [professionalism](#) as an external and imposed ideal.

"When both constructs were seen as acting in opposition, students tended to forgo professionalism in favour of becoming a 'good' doctor," Dr Cuesta-Briand said. "There were areas of overlap however and students clearly honoured elements that are core to professionalism. These areas of overlap should be a starting point upon which medical educators can build on discussion about professionalism."

Data for the qualitative study was collected through focus groups conducted with students who were in the clinical years (fourth to sixth year) of The University of Western Australia (UWA) MBBS program.

In fourth year, professionalism is taught through a series of lectures and face-to-face meetings with a Personal and Professional Development (PPD) mentor; in fifth year, the PPD program runs throughout the year and is formally assessed through reflective portfolio tasks, whilst in sixth year, professionalism is assessed through a case-based ethics essay.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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