

## COMMENTARY

### Professional Behaviour: What Does It Means?

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#### Introduction

Professional behavior is an area of medical education that has long been of concern to medical educator. Professional behavior is one of the domains of the professionalism<sup>6</sup> and it's a behavior reflection of professionalism. But in spite of its perceived importance, until recently it has not been actively taught or reliably assessed<sup>6</sup>. The purposes of this writing are:

- 1) To provide appropriate definition of professional behavior.
- 2) To identify characteristics of professional behavior.
- 3) To identify valid and reliable assessment tools to assess professional behavior.

#### Definition of professional behavior

The root word of professional or professionalism came from profession. Profession is generally defined as any type of work which needs a special or particular skill, often one which is respected because it involves a high level of education and skill<sup>15</sup>. According to Crues, Johnston and Crues<sup>14</sup>, 'Profession is an occupation whose core element is work based upon the mastery of a complex body of knowledge and skills. It is a vocation in which knowledge of some department of science or learning or the practice of an art founded upon it is used in the service of others. Its members are governed by codes of ethics and profess a commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism and the promotion of the public good within their domain. These commitments form the basis of social contract between a profession and society, which in

return grants the profession a monopoly over the use of its knowledge base, the right to considerable autonomy in practice and the privilege of self-regulation. Professions and their members are accountable to those served and to society.'<sup>14</sup>

Professional is defined as 'related to work you do as a job. It is often used to mean having the qualities that you connect with skilled and trained people, such as effectiveness, skills, organization and seriousness of manner. It is also used to mean person who has type of job which is respected because it involve a high level of education and skills'<sup>15</sup>.

Professionalism can be defined generally as the combination of all qualities that are connected with trained and skilled people<sup>15</sup>. According to Hatem<sup>7</sup> professionalism can be defined as 'the extended set of responsibilities that include the respectful, sensitive focus on individual patient needs that transcend the physician' self-interest, the understanding and use of the cultural dimension in clinical care, the support of colleagues, and the sustained commitment to broader, societal goals of medicine as a profession.'

Behaviour is defined as the way of acting or behave<sup>15</sup>. Behavior refers to the actions or reactions of an object or organism, usually in relation to the environment, and behavior can be conscious or unconscious, overt or covert, and voluntary or involuntary<sup>21</sup>.

As a conclusion professional behavior can be defined as the appropriateness of somebody's action or reaction either intentionally or

unintentionally towards the changes of the environment or condition or situation that reflect on qualities that are connected to his or her responsibilities. In other words, professional behavior is a reflection of professionalism.

### Characteristics of professional behavior

*'The most common criticism made at present by older practitioners is that young graduates have taught a great deal about the mechanism of disease, but very little about practice of medicine – or, to put it more bluntly, they are too "scientific" and do not know how to take care of patient.'* (Francis Peabody, 1927)<sup>17</sup>

This comment was stated 75 years ago but still relevant for us today. It reflects both the great success and a significant failure in medical education<sup>17</sup>. Being a good doctor requires not only good knowledge and skills, but it is also requires professional behaviour<sup>17</sup>. Ginsburg and colleagues make a strong case that the key to valid assessment of professionalism lies in focusing on behaviour. Define professionalism in practical term<sup>16</sup>. As Arnold concluded based on his review, valid assessment of professionalism requires 3 critical issues to be addressed: What should be assessed? How should it be assessed? Why should it be assessed?<sup>16</sup>.

Base on Arnold's conclusion, we have to identify what are the characteristics of professional behaviour? There are a lot of characteristics of professional behavior that can be identified from the literature. However here we would like to highlight of simple and understandable classification of professional behaviour characteristics. Professional behaviour characteristics can be classified into 4 themes<sup>16</sup> which are:

- 1) Professional behavior towards one-self.
- 2) Professional behavior towards patient/client.
- 3) Professional behavior towards other professional/peer.
- 4) Professional behavior towards public.

1. Professional behaviour towards one-self consists of:

- Self-reflection

- Using concrete practical situation as a basis for critical self-reflection.
- Self-confidence
  - The ability to discuss shortcomings or failures without losing faith in his or her own competence.
- Self-welfare
  - Of the ability to find a balance between work and private life.
- Provide and receive feedback
  - Attributing importance to what others think about him or her conduct.
- Life-long learning
  - Establishing priorities in learning.
- Resilience
  - Recovering rapidly after a troublesome consultation.
- Dealing with mistake
  - The ability to come to terms with a personal error.
- Dealing with uncertainty
  - The ability to let mild disorder run its own course even though he/she has no idea of the diagnosis.
- Cope with aggression
  - The ability to deal with patients/clients who he/she considers troublesome (angry).

2. Professional behavior towards patients/clients consists of:

- Integrity
  - Dealing meticulously with professional secrecy when speaking with colleagues or acquaintances (somebody known).
- Detachment and commitment
  - Take care but not to become part of the system of the patient.
- Respect
  - Taking the opinion of his or her patient seriously.
- Deal with the patient/client diversity
  - The ability to deal with cultural differences in

presentation and experience of complains.

3. Professional behavior towards other professional/peer consists of:

- Transmural care
  - Dealing correctly with direct questions from other-healthcare professional.
- Cooperation with specialists
  - The ability to discuss a different of opinion with a specialist directly.
- Cooperation with support personnel
  - Choosing the right time and place to comment on functioning.
- Leadership
  - Distinguishing between professional and personal concerns in negotiation.
- Collegiality
  - Correct transfer of duties

4. Professional behavior towards public consists of:

- Accountability/Responsibility
  - Keeping promise and appointment
- Ability to make use of the opportunities of profession
  - Involving the history of the patient in the provision of care
- Norms and values
  - Awareness of his or her own norms regarding disease influence/the disease management.
- Quality management
  - Detecting suboptimally provided care within the practice
- Practice management
  - The ability to explain indication for making home visit
  - Evidence-based practice
  - Awareness of the meaning and relative value of scientific evidence in decision-making.

Since professional behavior is a reflection of professionalism, here we want to highlight elements of professionalism. There are 6

elements of professionalism as defined by the American Board of Internal Medicine<sup>10</sup>:

- 1) Altruism – the essence of professionalism, in which the best interest of the patient, not self-interest, is the rule.
- 2) Accountability
  - a. To patients – honoring the patient-physician relationship.
  - b. To society – addressing the health needs of the public.
  - c. To the profession – adhering to medicine’s ethical precepts.
- 3) Excellence – a commitment of life-long learning and to exceed “ordinary expectation”.
- 4) Duty – free acceptance of a commitment to service (e.g. advocating best care regardless of payment)
- 5) Honor and integrity – consistent regard for the highest standard of behavior and the refusal to violate one’s personal or professional codes.
- 6) Respect for others – including patients, families, other physician, peers and health care professional.

From the information above we can conclude that the elements of professionalism and characteristics of professional behavior are connected and correlated with each other. Now, we are able to identify the characteristics of professional behavior and then, we are going to identify assessment tools that available to assess professional behavior.

#### **Assessment tools to assess professional behavior**

Ginsburg and colleagues<sup>16</sup> make a strong case that the key to valid assessment of professionalism lays in focusing on behaviour. Define professionalism in practical term e.g. introduces self at first encounters. In summary, the most common assessment tools used are as below:

- OSCEs and simulated patient-based assessment<sup>10</sup>
  - OSCEs have been shown to provide reliable and valid assessment of students’:
    - Humanism
    - Communication

- Empathy
  - Both methods are using to assess qualities ranging from communication skills to cultural sensitivity.
- Student peer review or evaluation<sup>10-11</sup>
  - Reliable and valid to assess
    - Interpersonal skill
    - Professional behaviour
- Expansion of evaluators pool<sup>10</sup>
  - Evaluators may include patients, nurses, peers, faculty and house staffs, who provide feedback on learner's performance.
- Others
  - Virtual practicum<sup>10</sup>
  - Reflection<sup>7</sup>
  - The newly developed EPRO-GP (evaluation of professional behaviour of general practitioner) instrument seems to be a promising new tool to assess professional behaviour general practitioners<sup>16</sup>.

Validity and reliability of assessment tools will increase if the selection of assessment tools is firstly determined by the context/purpose of the testing situation, increase the number of assessment task and then make the assessment as objective as possible.

### Conclusion

The proposed definition of professional behaviour is the appropriateness of somebody's action or reaction either intentionally or unintentionally towards the changes of the environment or condition or situation that reflect on qualities that are connected to his or her responsibilities.

Professional behavior is a reflection of professionalism. The elements of professionalism and characteristics of professional behavior are connected and correlated with each other.

Validity and reliability of assessment tools will increase if the selection of assessment tools is firstly determined by the context/purpose of the testing situation, increase the number of assessment task and then make the assessment as objective as possible.

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