Faculty Assessment of Professionalism in the College of Human Medicine at Michigan State University

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OBJECTIVES

Background

One of the core values of the College of Human Medicine (CHM) at Michigan State University is a commitment to professional behavior. CHM has a set of professional virtues and associated behaviors that are taught and evaluated throughout the student curriculum.

- Competence
- Honesty
- Compassion
- Respect for Others
- Professional Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

Numerous student concerns about the professionalism of faculty had been brought to academic affairs, which raised issues of faculty professionalism.

- Faculty complained that they were held accountable for professional behavior that they were not witnessing in faculty.
- Questions were raised as to how we could raise faculty awareness of the student virtues physician professionalism curriculum.

In October 2008 a Task Force was convened to address faculty professionalism within the College. Members of the Task Force designed a survey addressing faculty knowledge, opinions and involvement with the student professionalism curriculum.

Research Questions

Specifically, the survey addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the faculty level of knowledge of the student professionalism curriculum?
2. What is the faculty level of participation in the professionalism curriculum?
3. How challenging are the professionalism attributes to model and implement as an educator?
4. What strategies/programs do faculty feel would work best for faculty development related to professionalism?

METHODS

We conducted a universal survey of all non-prefix faculty in the College of Human Medicine. The 13 question survey:

- was approved by the IRB at MSU
- was pilot tested among the Task Force members in July 2009
- distributed via online survey
- was sent out November 9, 2009
- two additional waves were sent out November 25, 2009 & January 18, 2010

RESPONSE RATE

There were 285 surveys completed out of 548 (52%).

- 61% Clinical Faculty
- 39% Basic & Behavioral Science Faculty

RESULTS

Questions 1 & 2: Faculty Knowledge and Participation

Sixty-two percent of faculty respondents were familiar with the six professionalism virtues, however, faculty opportunities to participate in the student curriculum were generally much lower.

Question 4: Faculty Development Topics and Programs/Strategies

The following professionalism topics were suggested by respondents for future faculty development efforts:

- Giving and accepting feedback effectively.
- Dealing with colleagues whose performance is unprofessional.
- Interpersonal skills with students/residents/patients.
- Modeling professionalism for students.
- Respecting colleagues and students from diverse backgrounds.
- Regular evaluations of faculty involved in student teaching.
- Appreciative inquiry and coaching for faculty with problem behaviors.
- Faculty professionalism among colleagues.
- Teaching chairs to deal with problematic behaviors/skills in faculty.
- On-going professional education and self-assessment.
- Work-professional life balance.
- Addressing student and peer lapses in professionalism.

DISCUSSION

Although 63% of the faculty are familiar with the student professionalism curriculum, they have limited opportunities to participate in many of the courses and activities (Figure 1).

The most challenging professional behaviors involved those with other colleagues. (Figures 2 & 3).

The top faculty development strategy suggested was:

- New Faculty Orientation (Figure 4)

Faculty development programs will be designed to:

- Improve faculty knowledge of the courses/activities in which professionalism is taught.
- Improve faculty knowledge of the six college professionalism virtues.
- Address professional behaviors faculty reported as most challenging.

Future efforts of the Task Force on Faculty Professionalism:

- Developing a common set of professionalism expectations for faculty and students.
- Developing professionalism annual review criteria.
- Developing faculty development programs to increase faculty knowledge and skills in professionalism.

Limitations of Study:

- Single institution
- Response rate may not reflect the views of the entire faculty
- Self-reporting may produce socially desirable responses and under-estimates the level of challenges to professionalism.