Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine

CQI CHRONICLE

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Integrating Ethics, Professionalism, and Clinical Skills: Remediation Narratives in Medical Education

Bryan Pilkington, PhD, Professor of Bioethics

Medical educators, like many philosophers, appreciate categories; clearly delineated and carefully defined boundaries aid in reasoning and in the execution of the tasks of complicated practices, like that of medicine. This appreciation leads to an interesting question when seeking to aid in the formation of future physicians with respect to their professionalism and ethical orientation. What content properly falls into professionalism and what into ethics?

However, sometimes the answer to categorically laden questions is collaboration. This theme led to two recent ethics forays of ethics into the professionalism and clinical skills spaces, both of which were discussed in recent P1CS and P2CS meetings.

What a professional owes to others, what requirements they might have to interact honestly, and how they are to navigate professional boundaries amid various cultural norms are not always easy clinical and professional skills to inculcate. In response to these puzzles, three ethics course threads were created and embedded into professionalism remediation classes.

"Truth and Truthfulness: Ethical Considerations for Honest Interactions in Medicine" is an attempt to complement professionalism remediation work and reflection (deployed in Phase 1), to address challenging situations where future physicians find themselves presented with conflicting opportunities to interact honestly but where such an interaction comes with a significant cost.

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Student Feedback Defines Student Well-Being

Niki Trivedi, BA, M1 & Jansen Engelbrecht, BS, M1

The Student Government Association (SGA) of the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM) enhances student well-being and advances its mission through continuous quality improvement initiatives. These include the Student Feedback Form and the ongoing Annual Student Survey, designed to establish longitudinal feedback for ongoing improvement and success, tied to the SGA's overall guiding principles of Advocating, Connecting, and Thriving.

The current SGA Feedback Form, hosted on REDCap in the Center for Discovery and Innovation, is configured so that email or identifying data are not recorded, though revealing may be requested if there is a clear and present danger. The SGA leaders review feedback and, when necessary, contact administrators such as the Deans or the Office of Student Affairs and Wellbeing. Preliminarily, we have identified themes of student concerns: reducing mandatory events to fit diverse schedules, improving campus wellness resources, and promoting academic and financial transparency. However, previous cohorts reported that the form could not serve as a means for clinical students to submit concerns.

To address all cohorts' concerns, the SGA leadership will launch an annual polling system that uses Likert scale questions to assess perceptions of wellness, cross-cohort relations, academics, and financial support. For example, to evaluate cohort relationships, students will rate their level of connectedness with other cohorts on a scale from Highly Disconnected to Highly Connected.

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LongMed Data: DGC Approval Process

Chosang Tendhar, PhD, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment & Miriam Hoffman, MD, Vice Dean for Academic Affairs

This article highlights the abundance of data available at Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM) for scholarly research and outlines the process for obtaining approval to access it. These data, collected through routine operations, encompass a wide range of information, from admissions data like MCAT scores and GPAs to student assessment and evaluation records.

Data can only be used for research purposes with IRB approval. If the request meets specific criteria, it can be approved via the LongMed IRB protocol. Otherwise, the investigator would need to obtain IRB approval. Once IRB approval is achieved, the investigator should apply for the data via the DGC process. Part of this process will require the IRB approval information. All school of medicine data used for research must be approved via the DGC, even if you have obtained IRB approval.

Data are released only for students who have consented to its use in research. Consent was obtained during a session within the Human Dimension Immersion and Orientation (HDIO) program, led by Dr. Stanley Terlecky, Chair of LongMed, and Ms. Marycarmen Kunicki, the honest broker.

During the HDIO session, Dr. Terlecky provides an overview of LongMed data, and Ms. Kunicki manages the consent forms. As the honest broker, Ms. Kunicki is the only person at HMSOM with access to the consent data. She is responsible for distributing de-identified data for approved research requests.

The data request process begins with the completion of a Data Request form, available from the Data Governance Committee (DGC) chair. Requests are approved by a simple majority vote, either during regularly scheduled DGC meetings or via email. Approved requests are then forwarded to the honest broker, who collaborates with the requestors to provide the data in a timely manner. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (OIEA) team provides support for data analyses as needed.

Course instructors may mistakenly believe that they can use the assessment data from their courses for scholarly research simply because they have access to it. However, no one should use assessment or evaluation data without explicit approval from the DGC. It is important to note that approval is not required when data are used for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiatives.

Integrating Ethics, Professionalism, and Clinical Skills: Remediation Narratives in Medical Education (continued)

"Obligations to Others: Ethics, Responsibility, and the Weightiness of Professions" (deployed in Phase 2) aims to place students in the best situation to reflect on what it is that they might owe others in light of their newly formed (or forming) professional identity.

"Physician Heal Thyself: Professional Boundaries, Ethics, and Wellness" (deployed at the cross-section Phase 1 & 2) seeks to help students navigate ethical conundrums that arise when cultural norms and modes of expression differ between healthcare delivery team members, patients and their families, and the physicians themselves.

These three course threads, all of which were completed successfully by all students who participated, yielded food for thought for Team 10 of the 2024 Curriculum Retreat (Caryn Loffman, Michael Oppenheim, Laurie Sullivan, and Bryan Pilkington). With the aim of continuous improvement, key points for further reflection include faculty time and resource allocation, whether to "open up" these threads to all students, and what additional topics would benefit from professionalism, clinical skills, and ethics collaborations.

Puzzling through dishonesty, irresponsibility, and unprofessional boundaries is not easy, but integration and collaboration appear to lead to opportunities for improved quality.

Student Feedback Defines Student Well-Being (continued)

Responses will be analyzed with Dr. Chosang Tendhar, to identify measurable outcomes, define performance standards, and adopt strategies for sustained improvement.

The SGA will then collaborate with the Student Advisory Group, the Wellness Committee, and administrators to propose feasible initiatives that gain HMSOM administration approval without compromising student needs. These changes, led by the SGA and informed by thorough feedback, will continually refine the learning experience for current and future cohorts.