

The Use of a Consensus-Based Ratings Format to Evaluate the Medical Professionalism of Clerkship Students During a Psychiatry Rotation

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Why Assess Professionalism in Medical Students?

- Medical professionalism is a widely discussed topic within health professions, teaching programs, teaching hospitals, and physician specialty societies. One of the six general competencies.
- There is evidence that medical students with poor professionalism is predictive of future problem behaviors regarding medical licensure and related issues.

How the Professionalism Assessment Tool was Developed

- A diverse group of people within the ECU Brody School of Medicine developed a task force to address the growing need to assess professionalism among physicians in training.
- This task force examined literature reviews & held discussions over an 18 month period
- This task force established a definition of “medical professionalism” and developed an assessment plan (see attached form). The assessment tool can be used throughout medical school and residency training.
 - ** Note: The two questions assessing system based practices were not included in the original assessment tool.

How the Professionalism Assessment Tool is Being Used in the Psychiatry Clerkship

- In response, the Psychiatry clerkship director needed a tool to better assess professionalism among 3rd year students.
- The Psychiatric clerkship agreed to pilot test the new ratings format during the 2008-2009 academic year.
- Faculty felt that there had been growing concern over the past several years about non-professional behavior among medical students rotating through the ECU Psychiatry clerkship.

Methods of Assessment

-Prior to implementing the tool, Psychiatry faculty received focused training on implementing it across all rotation sites.

-Sixty-eight medical students rotated at ten different clinical sites. These students were rated by nineteen different faculty preceptors using the new assessment tool.

-The assessment tool contains eight core items and two supplemental, department specific items.

-Ratings were based on a 3 point ordinal system where 1 equaled no issues, 2=some concern, and 3=definitely problematic.

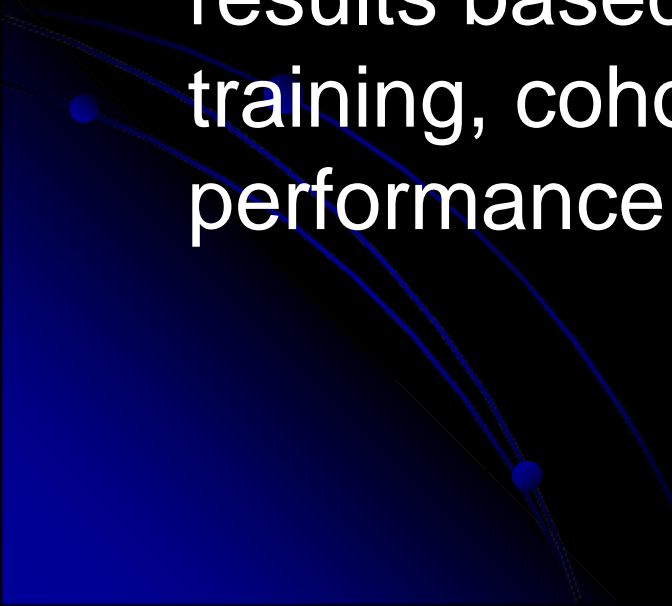
Methods of Assessment

- Ratings were completed via paper format.
- Data were analyzed based on scale reliability (alpha), inter-item correlation (Kendall's tau b), student demographics, rotation period, and each preceptor site.
- $P=.05$ significance level used in all analyses

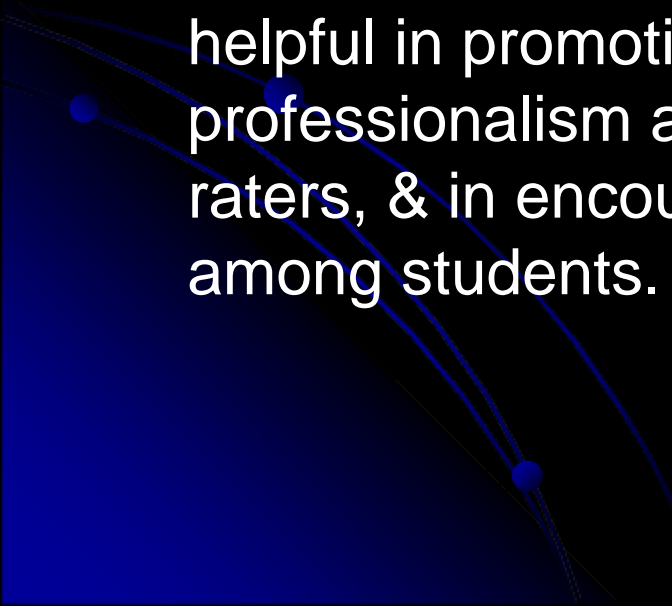
Results

- 136 ratings forms were completed on the 68 M-3 students.
- 4 students (6%) were independently judged by four different raters as having possible professionalism issues. None of these 4 students were at risk academically.
- In contrast, 49 students (72%) were rated by 17 different raters as being in need of additional instruction on at least one of the two supplemental items.

Results

- The ratings data were found to be only mildly reliable from a statistical standpoint (alpha reliability=.47).
 - There were no differences in ratings results based on gender, location of training, cohort time of year, or performance on knowledge-based exams.
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Conclusions

- This was our first-ever attempt to assess professionalism.
 - We found that reliability ratings of professionalism in a clerkship setting can be challenging, in terms of both logistics & faculty willingness to explain negative ratings.
 - Nevertheless, the use of a brief ratings format was helpful in promoting more explicit recognition of professionalism as an educational goal among faculty raters, & in encouraging more professional behavior among students.
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Conclusions & Future Study

- Ratings of students in a longitudinal fashion throughout the core clerkship year (M-3) may prove more useful; all M-3 clerkships will implement next year.
- We are trying to implement studies that involve longitudinal design as well as correlation of professionalism with other clinical performance measures.
- We plan to further pilot test the ratings format next year in at least 1 residency program.

Questions or Comments?

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