

Genetic Counselors' Perceptions of Workplace Respect and its Influence on Professional Decision-making

Lindsay Derby, Kathleen Berentsen Swenson, Tabitha Poorvu

Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, Massachusetts

Genetic counselors are dynamic professionals that work in healthcare, policy, industry, research, and a variety of other roles. Based on the 2016 Professional Status Survey, one in four genetic counselors report being dissatisfied with respect from healthcare providers, and one in five from business professionals. A lack of respect in healthcare professions has been shown to have negative consequences on job satisfaction, performance, retention, and patient outcomes. Herein, this exploratory study presents a quantitative analysis on the extent to which genetic counselors value respect and are satisfied with the level of respect they receive in their role, as well as the role of respect in job mobility and professional decision-making. A survey exploring respect value and satisfaction was distributed to practicing genetic counselors that were members of the National Society of Genetic Counselors. Respect from supervisors was reported to be “Extremely important or “Very important,” in 99% of respondents, and 87% of respondents were “Extremely satisfied” or “Slightly satisfied” with this level of respect. Similarly, 93% of genetic counselors found respect from colleagues to be “Extremely important” or “Very important,” and 91% of respondents indicated they were “Extremely satisfied” or “Slightly satisfied” with respect from colleagues. Nonclinical genetic counselors reported significantly higher satisfaction with the degree of respect from supervisors than clinical genetic counselors ($p=0.0196$.) Furthermore, genetic counselors with additional graduate degrees such as PhD or MPH reported lower satisfaction with respect from supervisors. Results show that professional respect contributes greatly to genetic counselor job retention and movement, with 81% of genetic counselors who have not changed positions in the last two years citing respect as a reason for doing so. Similarly, 76% of genetic counselors indicated respect played a role in their decision to leave their previous position. Practice implications and future directions are further explored.