

PAEA Roundtable Abstract October 2007

Session 215

How can we define "professionalism" for Boomers, GenX, GenY and the Nexters so it makes sense?

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Abstract:

Faculty in various health professions schools recognize that instilling a clear sense of professionalism in students has become a real challenge. The popular and professional literature is rife with articles on the "generation gap" between the two generations of World War II and the post-War Boomers, and the new Generations X, Y and Millennium. Since many of the current faculty are older Boomers, do we need a better understanding and appreciation of the context of the new generations to teach professionalism in a more meaningful way? Will we need to redefine professionalism in a world of corporate medicine and changing provider work-styles and lifestyles? This roundtable will provide a fun learning opportunity and give participants something they can take home and try!

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- * better understand how they perceive their generation and other generations' perspectives;
- * discuss how generational perceptions of "professionalism" may differ;
- * identify their own biases and perspectives on students from differing generations;
- * describe approaches to teaching professionalism based on this knowledge that could be used to better engage students; and
- * use this roundtable teaching method in the classroom to help students develop a clearer understanding of their own generational context.

Introduction:

Overview of roundtable format and process.

Literature summary:

Misunderstandings between generations in medical education arise from societal factors, problems within the medical system and differing experiences and expectations of particular age groups.

- External reasons for changing medical culture
 - societal change
 - faster pace of societal change
- Systemic problems
 - hidden curriculum (say one thing, do another; cynicism replaces altruism)
 - overwork, especially in primary care
 - more work for less remuneration
 - shift to corporatization
- Generational differences
 - Gen-X viewed as not committed, self-centered, disrespectful
 - Baby Boomers viewed as unbalanced, inadequately focused on family, headed for burnout
 - Gen-X and Gen-Y view health and life balance as important, and attention to these early in life may translate to more productive work years
 - patient-centered team care (X) v. individual devotion to the profession (BB)
 - merit/egalitarianism/talent (X) v. rank/authority/paying ones dues (BB)

What does this mean in terms of challenges to medical practice and to teaching professionalism?

Two views of the generations:
(see handout)

Communication and Connection with Gen-X, Y:

- make each person's/group's background and expectations explicit (to foster understanding of perspective)
- define outcomes and break down into a series of achievable goals that can be checked off along the way to provide multiple points of "gratification" instead of "delayed gratification" at the end
- allow input into the definition of outcomes and possible methods to reach end goal
- teaching must include information-sharing, participation in problem-solving rather than authoritarian prescriptive rules
- link discussions about commitment to outcomes and performance
- give clear feedback
- good pay is nice, but so are thanks, professional development, flexibility, rewards
- have the student mentor others as a means to understand challenges of teaching
- don't compare today's situation with a nostalgic past

Data from: Bickel J, Brown AJ. Generation X: implications for faculty recruitment and development in academic health centers. *Acad Med.* 2005;80(3):205-210.

In-Generation Groups:

Break up into generations: define core values, gender roles, work style/ethic, heroes and seminal events. Write notes on large newsprint; post on wall for comparison.

Cross-Generation Groups, I:

Break up into small groups with mixed generations. Discuss learning styles and barriers to learning effectively. Write up, post, and report back to large group. Compare findings.

Cross-Generation Groups, II:

Explore ideas for better teaching methods to address generational differences and make professionalism more relevant for today's students.

Wrap-up:

Share and summarize findings from the group process. Q&A.

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