

Professionalism for health workers

Professionalism for health workers despite the tough working conditions

What is professionalism

- The conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person
- The methods, standards, character, status etc of a professional
- Appropriate professional values, attitudes and behaviors that bring out the essence of a profession

Key aspects of professionalism

- Professional ability (knowledge, skills, competence, attitudes towards the job)
- Diligence , resilience and time consciousness
- Professional conduct (speech, mannerisms, behavior etc) and attire on and off the job
- Professional values (focused and clear-headed, not easily confused or distracted, level-headed and optimistic).
- Interpersonal relations (respectful of oneself and others, courteous, keeping confidentiality, faces up to

Professionalism for health workers

- Professionalism refers to a collection of attitudes, values, behaviors and relationships that act as the foundation of the health profession's contract with society.
- Professionalism demands placing the interests of patients above those of the health professional,
- Professionalism demands setting and maintaining standards of competence and integrity, and providing expert advice to society on matters of health.

How do health workers learn professionalism

"Professionalism is demonstrated through a foundation of clinical competence, communication skills, and ethical understanding, upon which is built the aspiration to and wise application of the principles of professionalism (excellence, humanism, accountability, and altruism)"

How do health workers learn professionalism

- The formal curriculum- (knowledge, skills, competence)
- The Hidden curriculum- informal training through observation of others especially role models

Professionalism was traditionally part of the hidden or informal curriculum.

- It was "caught rather than taught",
- As an outcome, it was implicit rather than explicit.

Competences expected of health workers

- Knowledge
- Clinical or professional skills
- Communication skills]
- Administration and leadership skills
- Teaching and mentoring skills

The health worker situation in Uganda

- Too few health workers per population (understaffing with heavy work load)
- Mal-distribution (most are in urban as compared to rural areas)
- Geographical maldistribution
- Inadequately prepared for the task
 - Ill equipped, understaffed, unprepared for tasks, often with few opportunities for refresher-training

Often maternal health workers not qualifying as skilled attendants

The tough situation with professional challenges

- Overwork
- Ill equipped
- Ill prepared for tasks
- Burn out
- Poor pay
- Absenteeism
- Lack of accommodation
- Insecurity
- Moonlighting for survival

The Ugandan situation regarding professionalism among health workers

- Public is concerned about unprofessional conduct among health workers
- This is probably is increasing.
- Studies indicate that unprofessional conduct among health workers is a major limitation to the provision of quality health services in Uganda.
- Assessment of community perceptions of quality care in Uganda found that the poor attitude of health workers was characteristic of the services that were perceived as being poor quality

WHAT COULD BE DONE

The development of appropriate professional values, attitudes and behaviors is a continuum that starts when a student joins a health professional training institution, right through their working life

- Refresher training in customer care
- Communication skills training
- Let everybody (all stakeholders) play their role to ensure quality services

Why health workers need to remain professional

- To communicate with patients, clients or their families
- To communicate effectively with other stakeholders including ministry

Health workers and communication

- To inform
- To educate
- Consultations
- To seek dialogue (stimulate enhance debate)

How to improve health communication

- Health workers training as health communicators or science journalists
- Journalists acquiring basic competences in communication health or in science journalism
- Journalism getting competences in basic medical issues such as medical conditions, basic research methods, medical jargon, basic health economics, epidemiology etc
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How to improve health communication

- Health workers getting communication skills (how to package information for different stakeholders)
- Health workers getting competences on how to deal with the media as necessary partners, basically on how to communicate to the different stakeholders in the language and format acceptable and understood

(how to conduct press releases, give media interviews, conduct talk shows, conduct public debates)