

Identifying Key Virtues in Healthcare Professionals

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OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the essential virtues that are vital to patient care among health care professionals.
2. Develop a deeper and broader understanding of these essential virtues within Duke University Health System and School of Nursing.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on Professional Identity Formation (PIF) and how this formation occurs over one's professional lifetime.

PIF emphasizes that professional excellence is more than having competence and knowing facts but rather becoming a clinician with sound moral character. At the core of PIF is virtue and character strengths that are an expression of who we are.

There is a paucity of research as to which virtues are considered most important. Explicit identification of these virtues is a key step in developing these virtues during PIF.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Departments of *Surgery, #Pediatrics, ^Orthopedics, +Medicine and %School of Nursing

METHODS

Q-sort methodology was employed to identify core patient care virtues among healthcare professionals in Duke University Health System and School of Nursing. We also recruited patients to identify the virtues held most important in their clinicians.

The Q-sort survey was offered to healthcare professionals in Otolaryngology, Emergency Medicine, Pediatrics, Nursing, Medicine and Orthopedics as well as allied health fields such as speech pathology, audiology, and physical therapy.

Self-identified patients interested in research and registered in researchmatch.com were asked to participate.

Participants were asked to Q-sort 29 virtues based on the question, "Which virtues are most important for clinical care?"

Factor analysis of Q-sort data was used to identify core virtues among various cohorts and determine which individuals clustered together. Iterative analyses and consensus among the research team decided the best fit factor Q-sort results.

RESULTS

160 healthcare professionals and 23 patients participated in this project.

Healthcare professionals: Honesty, Compassion, Critical-thinking and Integrity.

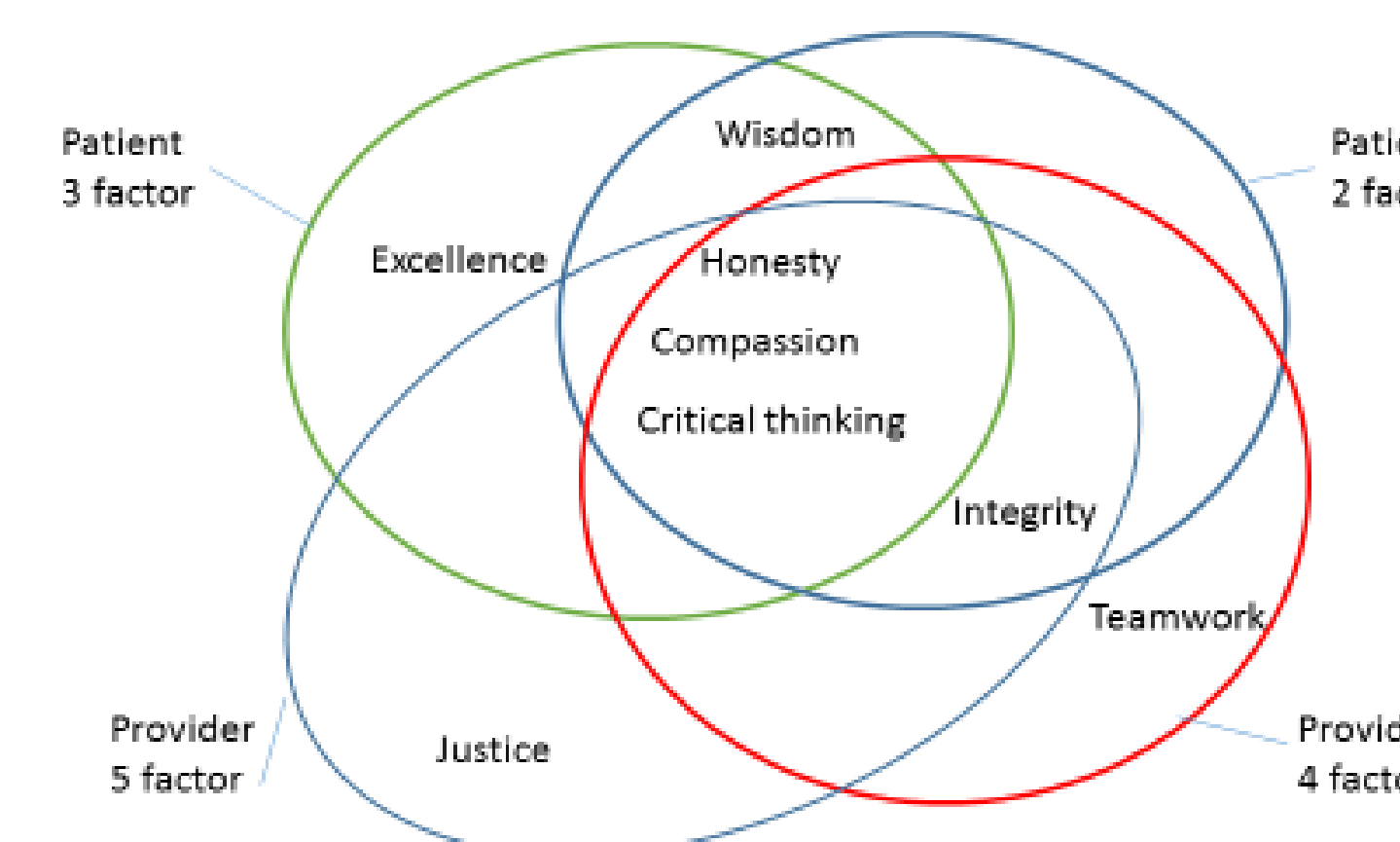
Patients: Wisdom, Honesty, Compassion and Critical-Thinking

Shared: Honesty, Compassion and Critical Thinking.

Figure 1: Q sort by 1 factor



Figure 2: Q sort by 2 and 3 factors



CONCLUSIONS

This is the first study to identify key virtues for patient care across different health professions and disciplines. Health education should cultivate these virtues in healthcare providers.

Most valued virtues include honesty, compassion,, critical thinking integrity, justice, teamwork, wisdom, and excellence.

Next steps:

- Sub-analysis of virtues based on participant demographics and health profession
- Develop educational opportunities for improving understanding and application of core virtues

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by a 2018 Duke AHEAD Innovation Grant (WTL - PI)

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