

How do you teach professionalism in pharmacy?

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Professionalism teaching and learning needs to be integrated, grounded and longitudinal throughout all four years of the pharmacy curriculum, says a new University of Manchester study.

It should start from day one in year 1 and increase towards the more professional practice elements in years 3 and 4 of the MPharm course, concludes the research report commissioned and published by the Pharmacy Practice Research Trust (PPRT).

The study, entitled *Professionalism in Pharmacy Education*, was headed by Dr Ellen Schafheutle, Lecturer in Law and Professionalism in Pharmacy in Manchester's School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences and is one of three commissioned by the PPRT to investigate different areas of professionalism in pharmacy.

The research, which was conducted in three different UK schools of pharmacy, found that both staff and students expressed difficulty in defining professionalism in pharmacy clearly and succinctly. For most, it seemed to be more of an implicit rather than explicit concept – the idea that 'you know it when you see it'. Students, in particular, based their definitions and descriptions of professionalism on those applying, seen and experienced in practice. This was despite the relative lack of practice placements organised by the schools of pharmacy.

Evidence was found for the importance of role models, particularly those who are not only pharmacists but also retain a patient-facing

element. However, learning of professionalism is informed and influenced by many factors, including practice experience often gained through part-time and vacation jobs. “Although this lies organisationally outside of the undergraduate degree, experiences around professionalism from these can still be incorporated into school teaching,” says the report.

Dr Schafheutle said: “Although the pharmacy profession has a longstanding code of ethics in which principles of good practice are laid down, it is only just beginning to engage in open discussions about the role and application of professionalism or how this is learnt or developed.

“The main aim of this study was to understand and clarify how professionalism is learned, cultivated and facilitated in the academic environment. We found that a school’s overall culture, or organisational philosophy, is important, where high standards with regards to professionalism are set, taught and enacted. Explicit statements, policies and codes appear to be an important part to support the development of professionalism (and professional identity) and it is hoped that the recently published GPhC code of conduct for pharmacy students will go some way to setting standards.”

PPRT Trustee, Peter Curphey said: “In order to nurture professional values and practice in pharmacy and create pharmacy leaders, it is important that we understand what aspects of professionalism in practice are valued by pharmacist, patient and the public alike. This is something that has not really been recognised in the past.

“To investigate this, we identified the principles and practice of professionalism in pharmacy practice as a key research priority and established the Professionalism in Practice Grants Programme for research that relates to the teaching, assessment and practice of

professionalism in [pharmacy](#). This first study has made an important contribution to the understanding of how professionalism is incorporated and learnt in the MPharm curriculum.”

The report can be accessed at:

www.pprrt.org.uk/Publications/2010Publications.aspx

Provided by University of Manchester

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