WHICH ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONALISM ISSUES IN GENERAL PRACTICE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN ABOUT?

Dr Nancy Sturman 1, Nargess Saiepour

1 Discipline of General Practice, The University of Queensland, 2 School of Population Health, The University of Queensland

Background
A diverse range of ethical and professionalism issues has previously been identified in Australian general practice, by both medical students and general practitioner (GP) clinical teachers.

Aims/objective
To establish which of these issues GP teachers and medical students consider the most important for students to learn about, and to establish self-reported student confidence in these areas. This information will inform GP teachers in targeting their teaching and facilitating student learning appropriately in this domain.

Methods/approach
A survey instrument was developed, based on international and Australian literature and interviews with GP teachers. The survey was distributed to GP teachers and medical students. Participants rated the importance of student learning about each of 32 different ethical issues. Students rated their confidence in managing these areas.

Results/findings
GP teachers and students agree on many of the most important issues (including patient confidentiality, medical mistakes, working with colleagues, and drug-seeking patients); there are also some interesting differences. Of the issues of most importance to students, student confidence was very high in patient confidentiality, and high in working with colleagues, but particularly low in career and training decisions, and medical mistakes.

Discussion
Students want to learn more about career and training decisions, and medical mistakes. General practitioner teachers should take advantage of opportunities to support student learning in these areas. Students may under-estimate the complexity and nuance in some important areas such as patient confidentiality and professional relationships in general practice, and GP teachers should continue to explore these issues with students in more problematic clinical contexts.