

Title: How the CanMEDS Professional Role Can Save Idealism in Residency Education: Insights from Senior Internal Medicine Residents

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Introduction: Idealism, or “the pursuit of noble principles, purposes or goals,” includes the qualities that traditionally inspire physicians in training. Idealism is usually present early in medical training, but has been shown to decrease over time due to pragmatism and cynicism . Fatigue and increasing clinical volumes in a resource-limited health-care system have been implicated in the decline of trainee idealism. Preserving resident idealism is necessary to maintain the delivery of high quality, compassionate care to patients. The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of idealism in Internal Medicine residents, and how it can be preserved.

Methods:

Using the CanMEDS Professional role as a framework, residents were asked to answer six open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of idealism in residency education, as part of an electronic learning module, and a thematic analysis of responses from 15 senior residents was conducted.

Results:

Resident responses suggested that support for idealism in residency comes from role-modeling, education, patients, and their own personal values. The erosion of idealism is believed to be a result of witnessing unprofessional behavior, developing cynicism and a lack of acknowledgement. Most residents feel that idealism cannot be taught, but can be maintained during residency through key elements of the CanMEDS Professional role.

Conclusion:

Maintaining idealism and preventing its erosion should be an essential goal of residency education. Educators are encouraged to continue to develop and examine the best methods for teaching the Professional Role in residency, as using it as framework can help maintain idealism.