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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Exploring the components of professional ethics for residents of Iranian universities of medical sciences

Background: Professional ethics answers the ethical issues of various professions and has specific principles for it. The purpose of this study was to identify the Components of professional ethics for residents of Iranian universities of medical sciences.

Method: This qualitative study was conducted in Aja University of Medical Sciences. Semi-structured tools were used to collect data. The participants in this study were ethics experts in medical sciences who were selected by purposive sampling. Interviews with 19 experts led to data saturation. Data were analyzed using content analysis by Inductive approach. The Lincoln and Cuba criteria were used to evaluate the study data.

Results: Based on the findings, 3 main themes including Organizational Ethics, Social Ethics, and Individual Ethics, and 12 sub-themes were obtained, as the components of professional ethics for residents of Iranian universities of medical sciences.

Conclusion: It is recommended that educational officials in university, while paying more attention to professional ethics in the curriculum of residents, may use the results of this study in the development of professional ethics training programs for residents of medical sciences.

Keywords: Medical Education, Professional Ethics, Qualitative Research, Resident

استکشاف مكونات الأخلاق المهنية للمقيمين في الجامعات الإيرانية للعلوم الطبية

الخلفية: تجيب الأخلاق المهنية على القضايا الأخلاقية لمختلف المهن ولها مبادئ محددة لها. كان الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو تحديد مكونات الأخلاق المهنية للمقيمين في الجامعات الإيرانية للعلوم الطبية.

الطريقة: أجريت هذه الدراسة النوعية في جامعة أجا للعلوم الطبية. تم استخدام الأدوات شبه المنظمة لجمع البيانات. كان المشاركون في هذه الدراسة خبراء أخلاقيات في العلوم الطبية تم اختيارهم بأخذ عينات هادفة. أدت المقابلات مع 19 خبيراً إلى تشبع البيانات. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام تحليل المحتوى بالنهج الاستقرائي. تم استخدام معايير لينكولن وكوبا لتقييم بيانات الدراسة.

النتائج: بناءً على النتائج، تم الحصول على 3 موضوعات رئيسية بما في ذلك الأخلاقيات التنظيمية والأخلاقيات الاجتماعية والأخلاقيات الفردية و 12 موضوعاً فرعياً، كمكونات للأخلاقيات المهنية للمقيمين في الجامعات الإيرانية للعلوم الطبية.

الخلاصة: من المستحسن أن يستخدم المسؤولون التربويون في الجامعة، مع إيلاء المزيد من الاهتمام لأخلاقيات المهنة في المناهج الدراسية للمقيمين، نتائج هذه الدراسة في تطوير برامج تدريب على الأخلاقيات المهنية لسكان العلوم الطبية. الكلمات المفتاحية: تعليم طبي، أخلاقيات مهنية، بحث نوعي، مقيم

تبیین مؤلفه‌های اخلاق حرفه‌ای برای دستیاران دانشگاه های علوم پزشکی ایران

زمینه و هدف: اخلاق حرفه‌ای به مسائل اخلاقی مشاغل مختلف پاسخ می‌دهد و اصول خاصی دارد. هدف از این مطالعه شناسایی مؤلفه اخلاقی حرفه‌ای برای دستیاران دانشگاه های علوم پزشکی ایران می‌باشد.

روش: این مطالعه کیفی در دانشگاه علوم پزشکی آجا انجام شد. برای جمع آوری داده ها از ابزار مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته استفاده شد. شرکت کنندگان در این مطالعه، متخصصان اخلاق در علوم پزشکی بودند که به روش نمونه‌گیری هدفمند انتخاب شدند. بعد از مصاحبه با 19 نفر از خبرگان به اشباع داده‌ها رسیدیم. داده‌ها با استفاده از تحلیل محتوا رویکرد استقرایی تحلیل شد. برای ارزیابی داده‌های مطالعه از معیار لینکلن و کوبا استفاده شد.

یافته ها: بر اساس یافته‌ها، سه تم اصلی شامل اخلاق سازمانی، اخلاق اجتماعی و اخلاق فردی و دوازده تم فرعی به عنوان مؤلفه‌های اخلاقی حرفه‌ای برای دستیاران دانشگاه‌های علوم پزشکی ایران به دست آمد.

نتیجه گیری: توصیه می‌شود مسئولین آموزشی دانشگاه ضمن توجه بیشتر به اخلاق حرفه‌ای در برنامه درسی دستیاران، از نتایج این مطالعه در توسعه برنامه‌های آموزشی اخلاق حرفه‌ای برای دستیاران دانشگاه‌های علوم پزشکی استفاده کنند.

واژه های کلیدی: آموزش پزشکی، اخلاق حرفه‌ای، تحقیقات کیفی، دستیار تخصصی

ایرانی یونیورسٹی آف میڈیکل سائنسز کے رہائشیوں کے لیے پیشہ ورانہ اخلاقیات کے اجراء کی تلاش

پس منظر: پیشہ ورانہ اخلاقیات مختلف پیشوں کے اخلاقی مسائل کا جواب دیتی ہے اور اس کے لیے مخصوص اصول ہیں۔ اس مطالعہ کا مقصد ایرانی یونیورسٹیوں کے میڈیکل سائنسز کے رہائشیوں کے لیے پیشہ ورانہ اخلاقیات کے اجراء کی نشاندہی کرنا تھا۔

طریقہ: یہ معیاری مطالعہ آجا یونیورسٹی آف میڈیکل سائنسز میں کیا گیا تھا۔ ڈیٹا اکٹھا کرنے کے لیے نیم ساختہ ٹولز استعمال کیے گئے۔ اس مطالعہ میں حصہ لینے والے طبی سائنس کے اخلاقیات کے ماہرین تھے جنہیں مقصدی نمونے لینے کے ذریعے منتخب کیا گیا تھا۔ 19 ماہرین کے ساتھ انٹرویوز ڈیٹا سیچوریشن کا باعث بنے۔ معلوماتی نقطہ نظر کے ذریعہ مواد کے تجزیہ کا استعمال کرتے ہوئے ڈیٹا کا تجزیہ کیا گیا۔ لیکن اور کیویا کے معیار کو مطالعہ کے اعداد و شمار کا جائزہ لینے کے لیے استعمال کیا گیا تھا۔

نتائج: نتائج کی بنیاد پر، 3 اہم موضوعات بشمول تنظیمی اخلاقیات، سماجی اخلاقیات، اور انفرادی اخلاقیات، اور 12 ذیلی موضوعات حاصل کیے گئے، جو ایرانی میڈیکل سائنسز کی یونیورسٹیوں کے رہائشیوں کے لیے پیشہ ورانہ اخلاقیات کے اجراء کے طور پر ہیں۔

نتیجہ: یہ سفارش کی جاتی ہے کہ یونیورسٹی میں تعلیمی حکام، رہائشیوں کے نصاب میں پیشہ ورانہ اخلاقیات پر زیادہ توجہ دیتے ہوئے، اس مطالعے کے نتائج کو طبی سائنس کے رہائشیوں کے لیے پیشہ ورانہ اخلاقیات کے تربیتی پروگراموں کی ترقی میں استعمال کریں۔

مطلوبہ الفاظ: طبی تعلیم، پیشہ ورانہ اخلاقیات، کوالٹیو ریسرچ، رہائشی

INTRODUCTION

Professional ethics is one of the new branches and dimensions of ethics that, by providing appropriate systems, seeks to respond to the ethical issues of various and different professions (1). In fact, professional ethics is the inner vim and nature of a human who requires a person to carry out professional work without threat or coercion and external pressure (2). In other words, professional ethics is a set of principles and standards of human conduct that determines the behavior of individuals and groups and is a rational thinking process whose purpose is to determine the values of the organization (3).

Nowadays, professionalism has significant growth with progress in medical knowledge and biomedical technology, particularly with the increasing number of ethical issues, the importance of training and promoting professional ethics among medical students has multiplied (4-7). Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the factors that threaten the medical profession and the appearance of deficiencies such as degradation or underestimation of medical ethics, the spread of corruption in today's society, negligence in adapting medical matters to religious standards, professional inferiority behaviors and medical failure, as well as training and promoting professional ethics in medical sciences (8).

Ethics education is a fundamental component and indicator of any profession, Specialists in each profession must teach the distinct and different professional ethics of their profession (9). The study of documentation shows that the promotion of the principles of professional performance through the emphasis on teaching ethical foundations leads to people's confidence and trust of people in medical staff. King and Scudder in a study conducted by participation of 238 nurses from United States hospitals, found that one of the features of a qualified nurse is to observe professional ethics in its work environment and report its errors and misconduct (10). In a study conducted by Robins et al at the University of Washington, 120 students from the second year of medical science identified ethical professional elements. The findings represented that the students' comments were consistent with the internal codes of the United States, and they introduced the area of conflict in professional ethics and misuse of power as professional anti-ethical factors (11).

The results of the research done by Askarian et al. showed that medical students evaluate the professional behavior of their colleagues weakly. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to and focus on the educational and professional education programs for students and faculty members using innovative teaching methods (12). Mohammad Pour and his colleagues, conducted a study with title of "Assessing the ethical qualities of nursing students of the Urmia Nursing Faculty". The results of their study showed that the main methods of obtaining moral competence were summarized in four areas: clinical environment, curriculum, having academic competence of professors in the field of professional ethics, and motivation and interest of nursing students into nursing professions (13). Universities should improve ethical and moral status of students, and professors should play a role. Professors should be engaged in ethical

activity because there are credible elements among young people whose behavior and speech have a significant impact on the classroom environment and affect the behavior of students (14).

A review of theoretical foundations and research background showed that systematic and comprehensive research has not been conducted to identify the indicators and dimensions of professional ethics in the medical profession; however, research related to each subject has been considered a part of professional ethics toward the observance of professional codes of ethics in medicine. As a result, identifying the component of professional ethics for residents of Iranian universities of medical sciences seemed to be important.

METHODS

This study was designed and conducted as a qualitative exploratory research to determine the components of professional ethics for residents of Iranian universities of medical sciences. This study was conducted at Aja University of Medical Sciences. Participants in this study were 19 faculty members of medical universities in Tehran. The Inclusion criteria included having expertise and research work in the field of professional ethics and medical ethics, as well as being interested in participating in this study. Purposeful sampling method was used to collect data.

Semi-structured interview tools were used for data collection. The initial questions were: "Explain your experiences and insights on professional ethics in the practice?", "What is your definition of professional ethics and professionalism for residents?" "What are the professional ethics indicators for residents from your point of view?". According to the participant's answers, the next questions were asked for follow-up. The interviews were conducted after administrative coordination and scheduling in the interviewee's office and in a quiet environment. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes to 90 minutes; the context of the interviews was fully recorded. The interviews continued until information saturation was achieved (15).

Data were collected through individual interviews, and then they were analyzed simultaneously. The content analysis method was used to analyze the interviews. Data analysis was performed by Inductive approach (16). The following steps were carefully followed in the data analysis: The interviews were typed word by word on the paper to make it easier to use and encode data. The typed text was then matched to the recorded information. Then it was examined in row, and the meaningful sentences that were related to the main subject of the research and had a great importance, were marked. The main concept of meaningful sentences was extracted as a code. In the next step, the sorting of the codes began. As such, codes with a common concept were placed under one category and named after this process. Using a continuous comparative analysis process, each data was compared with all data. The coded data was compared with each other. As such, with each new interview, previous revision categories and similar categories could be merged or new categories created. Then, using an experienced colleague in the analysis of qualitative data, the classification and naming classes of the classes were reviewed. Thus, by forming the

classification, the main categories of study were extracted and the relationship between classes was determined. The data of the study were used to evaluate the data, which were credibility, transferability, and confirmability by Lincoln and Guba (17) In this study, the credibility of the qualitative findings was ensured using member check. In order to ensure the accuracy of the data, the people who had the experience of conducting qualitative research were asked (peer check) to review the initial interviews, coding, and categories.

In this research, moral considerations (satisfaction, the reason for recording of interviews, confidentiality of identifying the interviewed person) were observed.

RESULTS

Nineteen Faculty members, including 6 Females and 13 males participated in this study. Of these, there were 4 professors, 6 were associate professors, and 9 were assistant

professors. In the analysis of interviews led to identification 130 initial codes were extracted as components of professional ethics for residents of Iranian universities of medical sciences that; after their integration of similarity and matching, 28 codes remained which were classified into 12 subthemes and 3 main themes including organizational ethics, social ethics and individual ethics, (Table 1), Figure 1 shows the main themes and sub-themes.

• **Organizational Ethics**

The organizational ethics refers to the extent to which a person has a moral commitment and responsibility to the organization. Based on the findings from the analysis of interview data in the category of Responsibility, the indicators "Responsibility for the quality of done work", "Responsibility for the use of organization equipment", in the category Observance of law, indicators of "Adherence to educational rules and regulations", "Adherence to administrative rules and regulations", "Adherence to

themes (optional codes)	subthemes (Axial Codes)	Codes (open codes)
Organizational Ethics	Responsibility	Responsibility for the quality of work done
		Responsibility for the use of organization equipment
	Observance of law	Adherence to educational rules and regulations
		Adherence to administrative rules and regulations
		Adherence to Research rules and regulations
	Loyalty	Loyalty to the medical profession
Loyalty to the values of the organization		
Social Ethics	Justice	Establishing the same conditions for the treatment of patients
	Respect	Respect for patients and colleagues
		Maintaining humanity dignity of people
	Bailment and Secrecy	empathy with patients
		Trusteeship and privacy in not disclosing the information of colleagues and patients
		Observing the privacy of colleagues and patients
	Usefulness	Preventing verbal damage to patients and colleagues
		Not paying attention to material benefits as the goal of medical care
	Honesty	Preventing Physical Damage to Patients
		Being honest in behavior
Independence	Having honesty in speech	
	Having professional independence	
	Having individual autonomy	
Individual Ethics	Criticism	Admission of individual mistakes
		Having a tolerance on dealing with customer perspectives
	Effort and Perseverance	Having the spirit of excellence and competition
		Seek of excellence
	Faith and Belief	Attempting to make scientific progress
		Attempting to Self-purification
		Trust in God in all affairs
		Effort to promote Ethical development

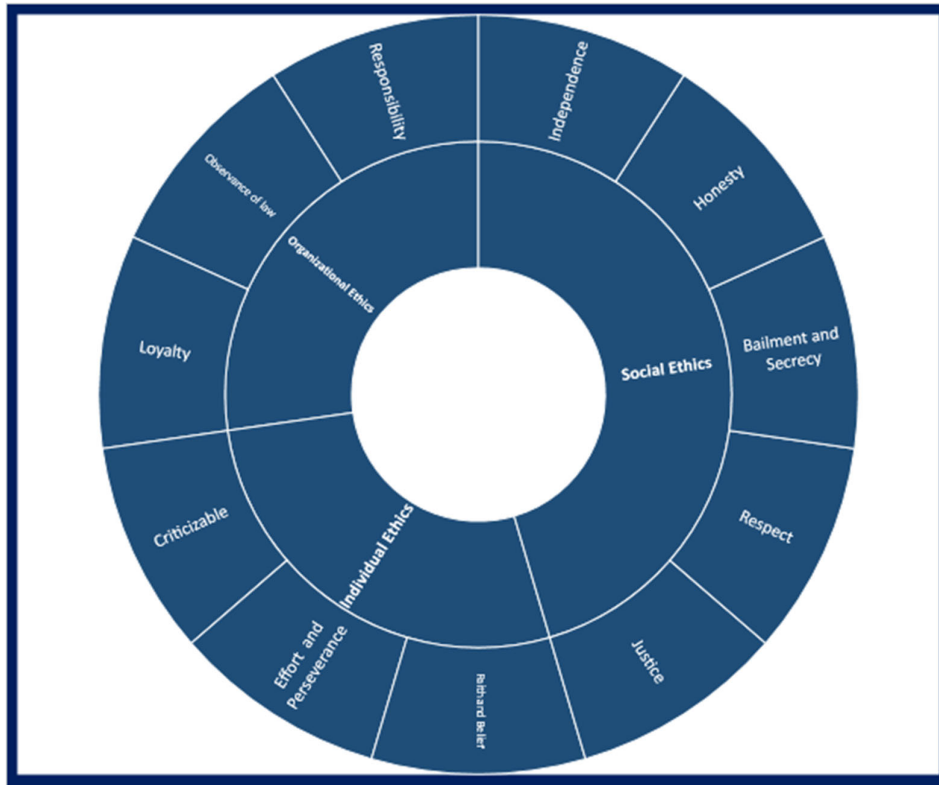


Figure 1. The main themes and sub-themes

research rules and regulations", in the category of Loyalty, indicators of "Loyalty to the medical profession", "Loyalty to the values of the organization", were coded after the analysis. From the viewpoints of participants, attention to the reputation of the organization and the proper use of the equipment, observance of laws and regulations, attention to the values of the organization, commitment and obligation to the profession were among the indicators of professionalism that the staff must adhere and committed to them.

The interviewer of Code 005 stated: *"One of the indicators of professional ethics in the professional standards is the interpersonal communication.....everyone understands his tasks and can perform his responsibilities according to ethics. When we work in a group, from the point of view of professional ethics, maintaining the ideals of the organization is part of our ethics, and we must adhere to it"*. In this case, the interviewer of Code 007 told us: *"When we talk about the profession, it also includes occupational knowledge, both the profession itself and the organization. When we say that the supreme leader can be responsible for the department, he can be the head of the hospital or he can be the minister of health. This issue that I send the information in exact time and I never do not make a mistake that will harm the organization and its reputation..."*

The physician or treatment cadre should attention to the fact that his actions and behavior have a great impact on his

organization and his or her scientific career. In other words, the development of the scientific career and the growth and excellence of the organization depends on his professional performance. The interviewer of code 0014, also said: *"It is important that we do not sabotage in the organization, provide statistics and accurate reports; do not falsify and do not lie"*.

• **Social Ethics:**

The social ethics section is considered to be the most important part of ethics, since human beings necessarily need to live in society and depend on the help of others and helping to others. The doctor and the treatment staff in their relationship with the patient and companion patient have a moral obligation to protect the secrets of the patient and observe ethical codes. According to the findings of the analysis of interview data in the category of Justice, the indicators of "Establishing the same conditions for the treatment of patients", in the category of Respect, indicators of "Respect for patients and colleagues", "Maintaining human dignity of people", "Empathy with patients". In the category of Bailment and Secrecy, indicators of "Trusteeship and privacy in not disclosing the information of colleagues and patients", "Observe the privacy of colleagues and patients", In the category of Usefulness, indicators of "Prevent verbal damage to patients and colleagues", "Not paying attention to material benefits as the goal of medical care", "Preventing Physical Damage to Patients", in the

category of Honesty, indicators of "Being honest in behavior", "Being honesty in speech", in the category of Independence, indicators of "Having professional independence", "Having individual autonomy", were coded after the analysis.

Interviewee of Code 0018 also stated that adheres to ethical principles and responsible behavior towards patients and colleagues, ensures the excellence and progress of the medical profession: *"If someone with disheveled clothes comes to the clinic, we must know that he is the servant of the Lord, and the one who comes to the clinic and supported by someone else, we must make the most effort for both. If medical ethics be along with advanced science, precision, responsible behavior, care for the patient's life, the belief that God sees us every second, the medical service will be perfect, which is the highest level. If the physician has good behavior with the patient, it will evolve in the process of the disease"*. If the medical staff and the physician are responsible in their profession and be responsive to their duties and profession, they will certainly respect professional ethics, and this will establish a reciprocal relationship between patients, the medical staff, and doctors. As the interviewee of Code 0011 believed *"Professional ethics sometimes appear in the form of individual or organizational ethics, for example, in the hospital; the rest room between men and women must be separate. Also, we should not disrespect the patient and this is the responsibility of everyone"*.

Respecting the personality of the patient and maintaining human dignity is one of the main issues of professional ethics in medicine. In this regard, the interviewee of Code 0016 stated that: *"We need to find medicine (medical care), not to be convinced of its own right, but also to pass its right, as long as the doctor does not oppress people. That the doctor would do it, Self-sacrifice and compassion, and the patient knows his family"*.

- **Individual Ethics:**

In this sense, each person has Ethical responsibility in his or her personal life towards himself, the family, the citizens, and all those who interact with them. According to the findings of the analysis of interview data in the category of Criticism person, indicators of "Admission of individual mistakes", "Having a tolerance on dealing with customer perspectives", in the category of Effort and Perseverance, indicators of "Having the spirit of excellence and competition", "Seek of excellence", "Attempting to make scientific progress", in the category of Faith and Beliefs, indicators of "Attempting to Self-purification", "Trust in God in all affairs", "Effort to promote Ethical development", were coded.

Individual ethics also have ethical values related to the individual's life of human beings, regardless of the relation of one to another. The interviewer of code 0019 told us: *"This issue that a nurse, medical staff or doctor does not respect the patient, does not behave respectfully, does not escort the patient in the room, if he does not do this, nobody will answer him, but he should observe this behaviors"*.

Interviewer of Code 009 also told us: *"I believe that the human profession is an important part of human life, this issue that I enter into a profession, if I know my profession, I will have a positive effect, if a healthy and sound person*

enters the profession, the patients love him, because he has a suitable behavior and respect his career".

The medical staff and doctor should constantly seek to strengthen their knowledge and enhance their abilities and skills. Earning experience and increasing knowledge help to the treatment of staff to do its job well and to some extent prevent errors and shortcomings. Interviewer of Code 005 stated: *"Among professional ethics indicators is the observance of professional standards. Another indicator is to increase our knowledge and to keep our knowledge updated"*.

The characteristics of the individual's ethics of the therapeutic staff are considered to be the strengths of the continuing success of the profession of cadre in treatment. If the therapeutic staff and the physician have built up a high ethical standard, in addition to being able to properly carry out their professional tasks, they will definitely please the colleagues and the God, and this will help the therapist to enjoy his or her profession. In this regard, Interviewer of Code 0018 also believed: *"We must know that God is Watchful, and these are also servants of God and behave in such a way that God is pleased with us"*. Interviewer of Code 0015 also stated: *"In the field of professional medical ethics; when I go to a hospital to see a sick with my professor, because my professor is comforting the sick, I do it, but when I am alone, I do not it. My behavior in two different situations, one of which is to carry out a task and another is in clinical work"*.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify the components of professional ethics for residents of Iranian universities of medical sciences. Based on the findings of the present study, the components of professional ethics for residents included 3 main themes (Organizational Ethics, Social Ethics, Individual Ethics) and 12 sub-themes, including: Responsibility, Observance of law, Loyalty, Justice, Respect, Bailment and Secrecy, Usefulness, Honesty, Independence, Criticism, Effort and Perseverance, and Faith and Belief.

Professional ethics ensures and guarantees the best human relationships between the physicians, professional colleagues and patients. When the healthcare professors and physicians have professional and ethical behavior, in addition to performing and fulfilling their professional duties properly, patients and visitors will also feel confident and relaxed.

Nowadays, teaching medical professionalism is considered as an important and essential aspect of medical education (18). Teaching professionalism provides an opportunity to address the dissonance and disorders of health care (19). Professional behavior improves the quality of work life and professionalism of the medical staff, and they must learn professional behavior and use their relationships with colleagues and patients (20). The formulation of ABIM's will eliminate Six aspects of desirable professionalism (altruism, accountability, supremacy, duty, honor and integrity and respect for others), as well as the five attitudes, behaviors and actions. (Abuse of power and sexual harassment, conflict of interests, professional pride, medical violations, and fraud in

research) (21).

In accordance with the findings of the present study, Jahanpour et al. classified the dimensions of professional ethics in nursing, including confidentiality of patient information, the honesty of experts, having good faith with the patient, respecting the religious beliefs of the patient, satisfaction of the patient and patient's trust (22). Khadivi et al. categorized the dimensions of professional ethics as honesty, trust, fairness, secrecy, promotion of knowledge and ability, conscientiousness, respect for colleagues, promotion of quality of care, and commitment to the preservation of nursing dignity (23).

Vasegh Rahimparvar et al. in their research, classified the dimensions of professional in Midwifery as the components of observance of the right of the dignity of the patient, the right to decide the patient, obtaining informed consent from the patient, disclosure of information to the client (telling the truth), observance of the right to keep confidential information, observing of the rules of disclosure of patient information, respect for the patient's right to privacy, profitability and lack of harm to the patient, respect for the rights of the patient, professional association with the colleague (24).

The results of a research study have shown that self-confidentiality, authority, charity, justice, respect for human life, non-harm, personal injury, honesty are important components of professional ethics among the nursing staff (25). The results of a workshop which held at the Annual International Congress of the European Medical Education Association in Amsterdam in 2005 showed that professors believe that issues such as academic honesty, respect and self-consciousness in practice, altruism, pure care and compassion toward students, accountability to students and the institute and society, tendency to accept mistakes, humanity, commitment to lifelong learning and Continuous learning improves and continuously improves the learning experiences, are transmitted through them by hidden curricula (26).

Managers in any organization, including hospitals, can improve and promote professional ethics and professionalism in their organization in order to improve the efficiency of their organizations (27). Promoting the principles of professional performance through the emphasis on teaching ethical foundations leads to people's confidence and trust in the Medical group (28).

Observing ethics in medical science professions ensures the health of the therapeutic process, and it causes to increase the commitment, accountability, confidence and trust to the therapeutic staff. Nowadays, at the same time with the advancement of technology and achievement of modern medical technologies, human societies have faced challenges and sometimes many problems, especially in the field of medical science. Ethical considerations, attention to human

beliefs, observance of medical ethics, patient satisfaction, etc. are among these challenges. Hence, attention of the ethical and human basis, along with the achievement of modern technologies, is very necessary. Because not considering the ethical and human principles not only causes to delay advances in the field of biomedicine, but also it leads to the ineffectiveness of these achievements, and will create even more problems. Observing professional ethics in therapeutic staff is very important for effective communication with the patient, because it leads to patient's trust and satisfaction.

Therefore, consideration of the fundamentals of Ethics and Professional Ethics and its continuous evaluation in medical curriculum and medical settings is essential, therefore ethics and professional ethics must be learned and trained in professional behavior. It is necessary to pay more attention to educational policy and design and development of curriculum in course of residency, as they will be able to develop scientific and explicit approaches to gain professional competencies and competencies. The results of this study represent the components of professional ethics for residents. Therefore, it is suggested that policymakers and curriculum planners provide educational opportunities and design effective strategies for understanding, recognition and development of these indicators in students of medical science universities.

One of the limitations of this research was that the results were collected based on the opinion of experts and scholars, and if the results were collected through the analysis of documents and other methods, it would show more Reliability and generalization. One of the strengths of this research was exploring of Professional Ethics for medical students in Iran based on the cultural and religious context of society

Ethical considerations

Ethical issues including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, redundancy, etc. have been completely observed by the authors.

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