Understanding and Supporting Professional Identity Formation Using the Kegan Model of Adult Identity Development

TITLE: Understanding and Supporting Professional Identity Formation Using the Kegan Model of Adult Identity Development

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SUBMISSION ROLE: Sessions on Medical Education

ABSTRACT BODY:

Topic Short Description: This session will introduce Dr. Robert Kegan's model of adult identity development and its usefulness in supporting appropriate professional identity formation in medicine. Kegan describes five stages of increased complexity that determine individuals' world views and guide their behavior. Much of the development described by Kegan occurs during young adulthood, the same timeframe in which learners in medicine are forming their professional identities, and thus can impact the way they understand and demonstrate professionalism.

Presenters:

Michael Stein, MD, Department of Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Linda Orkin Lewin, MD, Department of Pediatrics, University of Maryland
Donna Chen, MD MPH, Center for Biomedical Ethics and Humanities and the Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences, University of Virginia

Facilitator: Michael Stein, MD, Department of Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

Learning Objectives: After participating in the session, learners will be able to:

1. Describe the key attribute of the worldview represented in each of Kegan’s ‘identity’ stages, and how an individual in each stage would likely decide between various courses of action
2. Describe the key elements which help foster a successful transition between Kegan identity stages
3. Describe the limitations in using brief interpersonal interactions to predict Kegan identity stages
4. Explain how the professional behavior described in the presented student/colleague cases might be explained in reference to the subjects’ underlying Kegan identity stage and how that understanding can help one mentor or coach that student/colleague

Session Plan: INTRODUCTIONS (15 minutes): Introduction of presenters. Brief description of medical professionalism as the result of internalizing the expected values and behaviors of a physician into one's identity as a professional. Reminder that medical students are in the process of creating a professional identity, and that medical educators could facilitate internalization of the desired professional values if they understood the developmental formation of identity. Brief statement about cognitive developmental psychology and Robert Kegan's interest in adult cognitive development and its relationship to development of adult identity. Ask participants to write down an example of an unprofessional behavior they recall in one of their learners or colleagues and to reflect on that example during and after the interactive didactic presentation.

INTERACTIVE LARGE GROUP PRESENTATION (30 minutes): Interactive large group presentations on the 4 most relevant stages of adult development described by Robert Kegan with examples of different world viewpoints using illustrative case examples from the medical education environment: Stage 2 describes individuals who can take the views of others into account, but are motivated primarily by their own needs and interests. Stage 3 describes adults who are motivated by pleasing others and emulating role models but have not yet internalized the values needed to act autonomously; Stage 4 includes adults who have developed their own internal set of values that are constant across situations; Stage 5 describes a very small number of older adults who can see beyond their own values and embrace those from very different cultures and frames of reference.

SMALL GROUP WORK (15 minutes): Table work: guided by a rubric provided by the presenters, each table of learners reviews a written case of a medical student and or colleague who has displayed unprofessional behavior. Groups reflect on the ways that the individual's developmental identity level/Kegan stage may have influenced the described behavior and then devise a plan to approach that student or colleague to better understand their thinking. Finally the group develops a range of responses to address the unprofessional behavior based on possible Kegan’s stages. Presenters will circulate amongst groups.
REPORT OUT AND LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes): Tables report out on their discussions and on how the Kegan model helped them better understand the unprofessional behavior in the prepared cases.


Level of Audience: Mid-career

Focus of Presentation: Continuum

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