This study measured professionalism views of medical students, residents, medical faculty, and practicing nurses by conducting 20 homogenous focus groups. Participants using an audience response system rated the behavior depicted in 18 clinical vignettes as either: unprofessional, marginally professional, or professional followed by a discussion of why they believed the behavior to be professional or not. The quantitative results will be discussed.

Abstract: Purpose
Situational learning theory provides a cognitive basis for learning professionalism.1 Many studies have examined students’ views on professionalism,2-5 while fewer have looked across the continuum of medical education. Here, we examine how medical students, residents, faculty, and nurses judge a series of professionalism vignettes. Our research question was: do views of first-year medical students, third-year medical students, residents, medical faculty, and practicing nurses differ in their ratings of a set of standardized professionalism vignettes?

Methods
After committee review of 80 cases, 18 with the greatest educational value and the most diversity of opinion were used in 20 homogenous focus groups. Participants indicated for each case if the demonstrated behavior was: (1) unprofessional; (2) marginally professional; or (3) professional. They were also asked if they understood the concepts of professionalism. The University of Alberta Research Ethics Board approved the study.

A dependent t-test was used to examine changes in self-assessed knowledge of professionalism (pre-to-post). Other data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance. Scores from the 18 cases and the change in professionalism understanding were dependent variables and group membership the independent variable. Effect size was measured using partial eta squared.

Results
Participants were 142 first-year students, 60 third-years, 32 residents, 30 faculty, and 29 nurses. The overall test was significant with significant univariate effects for 11 of 18 cases; effect sizes were medium to large. First-year students often rated the behavior more negatively than others. There was a significant decrease in self-reported understanding of professionalism, but no group effect.

Discussion
Professionalism may be best taught within context through use of clinical vignettes. At pre-test, respondents indicated a good understanding of professionalism, but were less sure after considering professionalism in context. Those more experienced in health care, or in the situation depicted in the vignette, tended to be more tolerant of the demonstrated behavior.

Level of Audience: Mid-career
Focus of Presentation: Continuum

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