



collective responsibility
inclusive
evidence-based
accountability
partnership of the willing
professionalism
patient-focused care
open involvement
medical standards
flexibility
open to change

Patient-Centred Professionalism

An International Project to Define Public Expectations of Doctors

We all want good doctors. We all want our doctor to be honest, properly skilled, fully up to date, to inform and involve us, to take account of our preferences and to treat us with dignity and respect. Such a doctor we can trust. Equally we want to be confident that the medical profession is making sure that these standards of good practice are observed by all doctors, everywhere.

This is the heart of patient-centred professionalism. It is important to patients on two levels:

- their own doctor's knowledge, skills, attitudes and conduct
- the profession's collective responsibility, through medical regulation and education, to make sure the practice of all doctors is safe, empathetic and ethical.

The project

Picker Institute Europe (PIE) is a charity dedicated to improving the quality of health care through the patient's eyes. It promotes a patient-centred approach at all levels of health policy and practice based on evidence from rigorous research. Patient-centred Professionalism is an important new PIE project whose aim is to bring together evidence about patients' experiences and expectations to help the medical profession in shaping its role and responsibilities in the 21st Century. This research project examines patient-centred practice, values and interests, and is being funded through a generous grant from the Picker Institute in the United States. It embodies a forum bringing together like-minded people and organisations - a 'partnership of the willing' - committed to implementing patient-centred medical care.

Progressive leaders in medicine are already working to make sure that the prevailing culture in their profession is fully in tune with contemporary values. They see the importance and strength of involving members of the public and patients as full partners in this endeavour. Our aim is to support and help them build on their individual initiatives.

Who is involved?

The project as a whole is led by Sir Donald Irvine, immediate past president of the General Medical Council and Chairman of the Board of Picker Institute Europe. The research is under the general direction of Professor Angela Coulter, Chief Executive of Picker Institute Europe. Forum partners include people from patient organisations and public bodies committed to patient-centred care, medical licensing and certifying authorities, medical schools, medical royal colleges and academies in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada. Recent discussions with medical leaders in these countries have elicited strong support for international collaboration on this subject.

What will the project do?

Our starting point is the existing professional codes that, to a large extent, reflect contemporary professional medical culture. In recent years several independent efforts by regulatory and educational authorities worldwide have sought to develop explicit definitions of the professional attributes and standards of physicians. These 'first-generation' codes of practice have produced overlapping definitions of the competencies, behaviours and characteristics considered both essential and desirable for doctors. While these codes of practice show the value of using explicit professional standards, none has been developed with a strong evidence-based, patient-centred focus. Nor were they designed as the operational

foundation for the full range of medical regulatory and educational functions - a requirement that has now become critical in all the participating countries as revalidation, recertification and the maintenance of competence come into being.

The research project seeks to address these outstanding issues by:

- publishing a review of previous research and policy analysis that has examined patients' perspectives on doctors and their role
- carrying out exploratory and qualitative research to examine how patients in the participating countries define their expectations of doctors in specific contexts (both through data collected from individual patients and patients' organisations)
- analysing existing data to help deepen our knowledge of what works and does not work for patients (for example through analysis of complaints, campaigns or requests for advice about medical care)
- examining patient-centredness from the perspectives of professionals; for example through interviews with representatives of medical education and the regulatory bodies
- conducting surveys to assess the views and experiences of the public at a national level
- publishing an international consensus statement reflecting the highest common factor of agreement between the public and the medical profession on the duties and responsibilities of doctors.

The forum partners:

- share data, experiences and examples of good practice
- are consulted on the research as it progresses
- help to encourage replication of the research in other countries
- help to develop policy as suggested by the research programme
- encourage implementation of policy changes arising from the research.

Our objectives

Over the next three years we are:

- carrying out research that will define more clearly and precisely patients' expectations of doctors, show how they are or are not already being responded to in different contexts of medical practice, and identify important factors that ease or impede a patient-centred approach
- disseminating the results of the research to inform and influence new developments in medical practice, standards and regulation
- establishing a web-based information exchange amongst the network of partners so that they can share experiences and ideas of good practice, and the best ways of implementing them.

Taking part

The 'partnership of the willing' is open to any individual or organisation committed to the vision and objectives of Patient-centred Professionalism. We invite those who are so minded to join us.

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