

PD IV: PROFESSIONALISM AND HUMANISM

- 1. *How are the traits of humanism reflective of professionalism?*** I would say that humanism, the ability to care about, as well as care for the patient, is the heart of professionalism. Humanism emphasizes empathy, compassion, a willingness to engage emotionally with patients. Professionalism focuses more on accountability, duty, skill, and expertise. Without humanism, professional runs the risk of degenerating into mere competence.
- 2. *How should physicians honestly assess their strengths and weaknesses of professional behaviors in residency and practice?*** This question could easily take an hour or more to adequately address. But the short answer is that, in terms of humanistic qualities, **physicians need first to reflect on their own attitudes and behavior, to not be afraid to honestly self-interrogate:** How did I feel about this patient? And at least as important, why did I feel this way? Did I treat this patient with respect and dignity? If not, why not? **Physicians also need to pay attention to how their patients react toward them:** Does this patient seem comfortable in my presence? Does this patient trust me? Can the patient talk openly with me? And if not, why not? **Finally, physicians can elicit feedback trusted others, both colleagues and friends and significant others.** They need to be able to ask, Do I seem more impatient to you these days? More judgmental? More harried? Dr. Martha Sosa-Johnson regularly asks a colleague, “How does my compassion fatigue seem today?”
- 3. *How should physicians promote professionalism for their colleagues and future physicians?*** All the research we have suggests that role-modeling is one of the most effective ways physicians have of conveying desired attitudes and behaviors to learners and peers. Ideally, we should have a health care and medical education system based on the principle of parallel process, so that attendings and residents would treat medical students humanely and respectfully, in a virtuous manner, while modeling these same qualities in their interactions with patients. Systemic change in this direction is possible, but glacially slow. In the meantime, I would advocate that each of you consider being a personal change agent in your upcoming residencies and then in your medical practices. Be a role model to your colleagues, your patients, and yourself of the values you say are important to you. Make a promise to yourself to do one kind thing for a patient; say one encouraging word to a student or fellow resident; make one loving gesture toward your significant other on a daily basis. Ask one question every day that allows you to see your patient as a person, rather than a walking constellation of disease. Share something with a colleague that shows you are more than a body with whom she can switch call.
- 4. *How does reflection and self-awareness influence ethical behavior?*** I’m not an ethicist, but I believe reflection and self-awareness promote ethical behavior in several ways: 1) reflection **enables us to recognize the existence**

in any situation of multiple and often competing values, and therefore work to reconcile these values 2) reflection **allows novel 3rd alternative solutions** to emerge that often have a better ethical foundation than our initial knee-jerk reactions 3) reflection **requires respect for persons** in and of themselves, an ethical position 4) reflection **reconnects us with virtuous behavior** that we value but may have overlooked – it reminds us that the right thing to do is not always the easy thing.

5. How is the practice of this reflection and self-awareness limited by time constraints, personal commitments, and feelings of burnout? The opportunity for reflection and self-awareness are clearly limited by all these things – lack of time, personal obligations, burn-out. But reflection and self-awareness may also contain the kernel of solutions to these dilemmas. For example, by taking a little space it is possible to reconsider priorities, to **reevaluate whether your time is really being spent consistent with your values**. Reflection may also help you **remember the importance of nurturing and not taking for granted your personal relationships**. And finally, awareness of burn-out and **reflecting on what burn-out is trying to make you aware of is the important first step toward rekindling a passion for your profession**.

Humanism: Personal Characteristics	Professionalism: Role Identity
Empathy	Altruism**
Compassion- a commitment to decrease pain and suffering**	Responsiveness to the needs of patients and society that supercedes self-interest**
Respect for others**	Accountability to patients, society and the profession**
Integrity**	Commitment to ongoing professional development**
Authenticity	Sensitivity to patient’s age, gender, culture and disability**
Spirituality	Commitment to excellence**
Fidelity	Ethical behavior**
Virtue	Honor