

Patterns of unprofessional conduct by medical practitioners in South Africa (2007–2013)

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A role of ethics in the medical context is to protect the interests, freedoms and well-being of patients. A critical analysis of unprofessional conduct by medical practitioners registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) requires a better understanding of the specific ethics misconduct trends.

To investigate the objectives the case content and sanctions of all guilty decisions related to unprofessional conduct against HPCSA-registered medical practitioners in the period 2007 to 2013 were analysed. A mixed methods approach was followed. The quantitative component focused on annual frequency data regarding the number of decisions taken against practitioners, number of practitioners, number of specific sanctions and categories. Relatively few medical practitioners (between 0.11% and 0.24%) are annually found guilty of unprofessional conduct. The annual average number of guilty decisions per guilty medical practitioner ranged between 1.29 and 2.58. The three most frequent sanctions imposed were fines between ZAR10 000 and ZAR15 000 (28.29%), fines between ZAR1 000 and ZAR8 000 (23.47%) and suspended suspensions between 1 month and 1 year (17.37%). The majority of the unprofessional conduct involved fraudulent behaviour (48.4%), followed by negligence or incompetence in evaluating, treating or caring for patients (29%).

Unethical behaviour by medical practitioners in South Africa occurs relatively infrequently.

Keywords: ethical transgressions, fraud, HPCSA, Incompetence, negligence

The needs and preferences of general practitioners regarding their CPD learning: a Free State perspective

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Background: The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) requires all registered Health Practitioners in South Africa to complete accredited learning opportunities, and provide proof thereof. CPD is the chosen model, which focuses on holistic development of the professional. The UFS Department of Family Medicine presents refresher courses for general practitioners, covering all relevant fields of interest.

Aim: The aim of this study was to find reasons and possible solutions for the perceived lack of interest in refresher courses by determining general practitioners' needs and preferences for CPD training.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study design was chosen, whereby a systematic sample of 300 general practitioners registered with the HPCSA as doctors in the Free State were asked to complete a questionnaire. Needs and preferences regarding learning opportunities and factors influencing usage of these learning opportunities were assessed.

Results: The responses from 60 participants revealed that general practitioners still prefer the lecture form of presentations in large or small groups. Topics that ranked highly were Infective Diseases, Cardiology and Respiratory Diseases. Respondents indicated that general practitioners prefer not to leave their practices unattended for an extended period of time.

Conclusion: Free State general practitioners still prefer the traditional lecture-room style of learning. Their declared learning needs are in line with the regular ailments they encounter within their practices. Strategies to accommodate those who find it difficult to attend, due to time and distance concerns, should be considered.

Keywords: CPD, Free State, general practitioners, learning opportunities, refresher courses