



The challenges of medical education in developing “true medical professionalism”

ChanJong Yoo

Department of Neurosurgery, Gachon University Gil Medical Center, Gachon University College of Medicine, Incheon, Korea

The purpose of medical education is to develop capable primary clinicians and to contribute to world health through medical research. Medical research plays an important role in basic clinical practice as it provides us with evidence and rationale for our actions. The educational goals of Korean medical schools are set up to provide students with appropriate objectives and motives.

Looking back, my interest in medical education began when I was assigned to the role of chief of medical education. I did not know much about medical education back then, and I based my lectures on the slides of senior professors and other medical professors' workshops. But even with the best lecture material, I do not think I knew how to pass this information on to medical students. To put it simply, I did not have a very firm grasp on what medical education actually was. After 2 years as the head of the medical education department, I went back to my daily life as a clinician. It was at this time that I wanted to learn more about what medical education was. I educated myself in curriculum develop-

ment, medical professionalism, educational evaluation and assessment, and teaching and learning methods at the Academy of Medical Educators in the Korean Society of Medical Education. Before being educated at the Academy of Medical Educators, I told the students, “Medicine is art.” Why art? The role of the physician is to explain a condition to the patients so that they can understand it, no matter their educational or social background. At the Academy of Medical Education, I realized that what I wanted to impart to the students was a lesson in medical professionalism.

The traditional definition of medical professionalism is based on personal knowledge and expertise in the patient-doctor relationship. In modern medicine, medical professionalism focuses on the importance of special social communication skills, which includes the ability to explain the patient's illness at the level of the patient and to help them decide for themselves in selecting appropriate treatment. Modern doctors are also encouraged to follow practice guidelines and improve their professional judgment based on honesty and sympathy [1].

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Corresponding Author: ChanJong Yoo (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2680-7692>)
Department of Neurosurgery, Gachon University Gil Medical Center, Gachon University College of Medicine, 21 Namdong-daero 774beon-gil, Namdong-gu, Incheon 21565, Korea
Tel: +82.32.460.8425/3304 Fax: +82.32.460.3899 email: nschan@gilhospital.com

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In today's society, the Internet readily provides information about health and disease. The definition of professionalism has therefore adapted and changed to meet the medical needs of the consumer. Modern medical professionalism serves as a standard of care and plays an important role in the improvement of the patient's treatment. Such standards can be further improved by developing communication skills, clinical knowledge, and teamwork skills.

Nonetheless, many professors are more enthusiastic about educating our proficiency in delivering expertise, diagnosis, and treatment options, and feel that teaching one more has served the mission of medical education. What is the position of a Korean doctor in today's society? Many people in Korea perceive the medical profession as a job that provides a good stable income, sometimes forgetting about the important role of medical professionalism. Despite the fact that most doctors in Korea receive special training after graduating from medical school, citizens' trust in doctors is not high, and the role and position of primary care provider in the medical field is lower than it has been in the past. Doctors in Korea are forced to obey excessive government restrictions and comply with ever-changing policies. Doctors, therefore, do not have the luxury of fulfilling their altruistic ideals and feel a lack of autonomy as medical professionals.

At this moment, "medical treatment" is being treated as a sales product in broadcasts and advertisements by the mass media. Some doctors are committed to the ideas of medical consumerism, to the technical capacity to meet consumer needs, and to business as a business, not as a calling. Even university hospitals, which we thought would be honest (and believed to live with pride), exclude the morality of clinical judgment, and induce many prescription of doctors [2].

There are many academic and social points of view

about the moral hazards of doctors in the Republic of Korea, and there are many articles exploring appropriate solutions. A new Code of Ethics has also been financed and emphasizes medical professionalism through lifelong learning.

However, there is not yet a self-transcendent system to check and enforce the control of one's colleagues in order to preserve the professionalism of doctors in today's Korean society, which is facing the universal pursuit of globalization and the development and democratization of civil society. The new generation of doctors prefers to work at its own pace as nuclear families and individuals rather than groups and societies, without pride or passion for their work [3,4].

A recent article, "General Medical Council; Tomorrow's Doctors, The New Doctors," reports that taking care of oneself is one of the doctor's duties. In other words, doctors are required to balance work and personal life, to take care of their own health in order to protect the safety of the patient, and not to take risks with their own and others' safety while taking care of the patient. The new-generation physician is sometimes defined to be selfish, rather than selfless, to be able to take good care of their patients [5].

As I said in the beginning, the goal of medical education is not to create selfish doctors with a sense of superiority flaunting their fame or humanity, but to develop those with professionalism so that they may treat patients to the best of his or her abilities and comfort their suffering with true empathy.

The current medical education in Korea should be more realistic and emphasize the importance of professionalism in becoming better clinicians [6]. However, there is still a lack of education and interest in medical professionalism at universities and university hospitals. At this time, the education on medical professionalism is not realistic. Under the current education system, the

students are not equipped to manage conflicts in their fields of interest immediately after graduation. We must ensure that through such education, the students have the ability to endure and adapt effectively to changing societal norms. Therefore, the school should provide practical and acceptable guidelines that all doctors in Korea can refer to in the field.

ORCID:

ChanJong Yoo: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2680-7692>

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