The role of GP's self esteem in critical decision making

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Medical Decision Making

Uncertainty

- Medical Knowledge
- Clinical Experience
- Stereotypes
- Physicians' Characteristics
- Emotions
- Contextual factors
- Patient's Characteristics

Decision Making

Medical Practice
Research Goal

Factors affecting self esteem & professional self esteem

GP’s Self esteem Professional Self esteem

Decision to refer a patient to hospital or not
SELF ESTEEM

- Society, and doctors themselves, place high expectations on the medical profession.

- Medicine is a profession that is committed to excellence in caring for patients, and continuous professional development.
SELF ESTEEM

What matters most is how you see yourself.
Self esteem

- A particular type of emotion

- Plays an important role when there is a risk of failure in personal decisions.  
  \( \text{Dutton & Brown (1997)} \)
  \( \text{Brown & Dutton (1995)} \)

- People with high self esteem expect from themselves to perform better to their acquired tasks, and also experience more positive feelings of self-worth following failure than do people with low self esteem.

- Individuals with higher self esteem seem to take more risky choices compared to lower self esteem ones

  \( \text{Josephs et al (1992)} \)
  \( \text{Larrick (1993)} \)
  \( \text{Wray & Stone (2005)} \)
Doctors’ self esteem

- **Positive relationship with:**
  - life satisfaction *(Carnel 1997)*
  - meaning in life & professional growth *(Taubman-Ben-Ari & Weintroub 2008)*
  - doctor-nurses collaboration *(Baldwin et al 1987)*

- **Negative relationship with:**
  - burnout *(Carnel 1997)*
  - Medical errors *(Waterman et al. 2007)*

- **Factors affecting doctors self-confidence/clinical confidence**
  - experience *(Szatmary, Arora & Sevdalis 2010)*

**NO study on the role of self esteem on medical decision making**
Professional self esteem

Self esteem

the evaluation of an individual’s worthiness by himself/herself

Skills in life

Professional self esteem

the sense of professional worthiness that a professional requires for becoming an adept in his/her field of work

Skills in work

Some studies correlating physicians' professional self esteem with life satisfaction and work satisfaction

(Carmel, 1997)

NO study on the role of professional self esteem on medical decision making, or medical mistakes
Research Tools

Self Esteem Measurement

- General Self Esteem
  Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) \( \alpha = 0.799 \)

- Professional Self Esteem \( \alpha = 0.684 \)
# Research tools

## Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>At times, I think I am no good at all.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scoring:** SA=3, A=2, D=1, SD=0. Items with an asterisk are reverse scored, that is, SA=0, A=1, D=2, SD=3. Sum the scores for the 10 items. The higher the score, the higher the self-esteem.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Compared with other colleagues in the same specialty:</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... my knowledge is</td>
<td>worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>... my communication with patients is</td>
<td>worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>... the way I manage difficult cases are</td>
<td>worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>... my ability to cope with a heavy workload is</td>
<td>less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I feel that as a doctor I worth a lot.</td>
<td>disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I feel that my patients recognize me as a good doctor.</td>
<td>disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I feel that my colleagues recognize me as a good doctor.</td>
<td>disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I feel that as a doctor I could do a better job.</td>
<td>disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\alpha = 0.727$
Outcome measures

Decision: referral or not

20 Clinical Scenarios

Question: Would you refer this patient to the hospital or not?

Answer: 10 (right answer: referral yes) 10 (right answer: referral no)

three-step process

- Review of the literature
- Focus groups with general practitioners
- Group of experts
Statistical Analysis

- **TOTAL REFERRALS** (Total score: 0-20)
  
The highest score the more referrals

- **WRONG YES** (scale 0-10)
  
The highest score the more wrong referrals → **OVERCONSERVATIVE**?

- **WRONG NO** (scale 0-10)
  
The highest score the more wrong decisions not to refer → **OVERISKY**?

**Controlling for:** clinical experience
work sector
 gender
Sample selection

- Online survey
Sample Characteristics

- N=135 GPs
- 66 men (48.9%)
- 69 women (51.1%)
- Mean working experience: 11.01 years in practice (SD: 8.25)
- Mean age: 44.35 years (SD: 7.73)
## Results

### Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF ESTEEM</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL SELF-ESTEEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.374*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self esteem vs. professional self esteem**
Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosenberg Self</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22.67</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem Scale</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>21.03</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Working Sector</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>20,97</td>
<td>3,81</td>
<td>0,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>22,90</td>
<td>4,20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results - Total Referrals

**General Self Esteem**

\[ R_{Pearson} = -0.258 \]
\[ p = 0.008 \]
Results-Wrong Decisions

General Self Esteem

$R_{\text{Pearson}}: -0.259$
$p: 0.005$

Over-conservative

WRONG YES REFERAL
Results

- No effect of professional self esteem on GPs’ Decisions for referral
Conclusions

- Male GPs’ scored higher for general self esteem than female doctors (p<0.05)

- No other study on gender differences on physicians self esteem.

- A meta-analysis indicated that men score higher in on standard measures of general self esteem than female but difference is small.

  Kling, Hyde, Showers & Buswell 1999
Conclusions

- GPs working in the private sector had higher levels of general self esteem comparing to physicians working in the public sector (p:<0.01).

- Adverse role conditions (e.g., role ambiguity), anticipated organizational change, job insecurity, discrimination and harassment were found to have a negative relationship with Self esteem.

- Doctors working in the public sector during the current economic crisis feel more job insecurity than ever before.

- Organization size has a negative correlation with employees’ self esteem.

Pierce & Gardner 2003
Conclusions

- In GP’s General self esteem is different from professional self esteem

- Even if medical training is focused on building better professional skills and higher professional self esteem, this is not enough to protect physicians from making mistakes since general self esteem plays a different role in medical decision making.

- Interventions on physicians feeling about them selves
Physicians with lower self esteem referred more patients to the hospital, even when referral was not necessary.

Defensive medicine

OR

Physicians with higher self esteem did not adopt an overprotective behavior in order to protect themselves by making mistake.

Defensive medicine

Furthermore

Defensive medicine is directly associated with more health care costs  

Physicians with high self esteem are more cost effective for the health care system

Garrant et al 2012
- Physicians Self esteem – Safer decisions
I love myself!
2nd International Meeting on Well-Being and Performance in Clinical Practice

18-22 May 2016
Chalkidiki, Greece

http://wellmed.gr/

Abstract submission deadline: October 15th 2015