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Health & Humility by Proxy: Examining Medical Companions' Perspective on Physician Humility

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Health & Humility by Proxy:

Examining Medical Companions' Perspective on Physician Humility

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
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Introduction



Defining Humility

- A multidimensional virtue encompassing self-awareness pertaining to strength and weaknesses, openness to new ideas and information, egalitarian beliefs, and other-focused approach to intrapersonal relationships.^{1,5}

Defining Medical Companions

- Someone who accompanies the patient to their healthcare visit, most commonly a spouse, family member, or caretaker.



Introduction

Previous research on health and humility finds that clinician humility positively correlates with patient satisfaction^{1,6}, trust¹, and health outcome²

- Very little research done to assess perception of physician humility from patient or third-party perspective

Perception of humility

- Perceived physician dominance decreases patient engagements, discuss humility as a counteractive behavior of dominance in the professional setting⁸

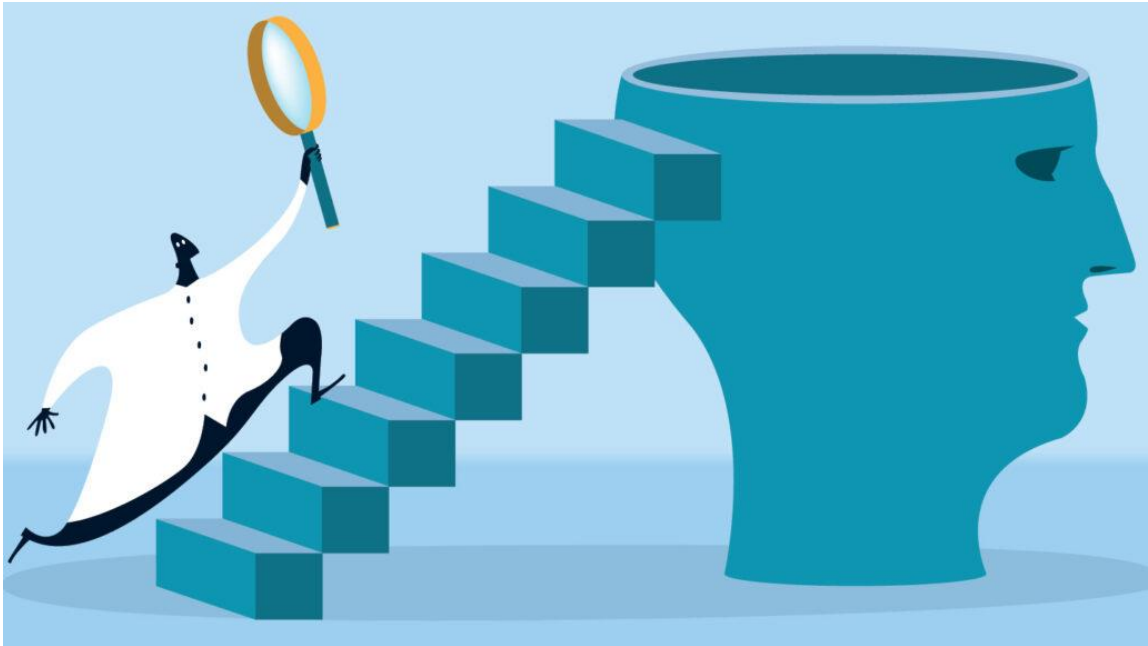
What to gain from the perspective of medical companions?

- Medical companions have been found to increase communication and understanding between patient and provider⁷, encourage medical adherence, and offer support systems⁴



Current Study

Describe physician humility from the perspective of medical companions



Methods

Survey

- Medical companions asked to complete a survey after accompanying the patient to the visit.
- This study will focus on responses given when asked to “Describe behaviors that made you think the physician was humble or not humble”

Participants

- 304 respondents, 278 after data cleaning, and 230 responses used for codes and themes
- Race/Ethnicity of participants as follows:
 - 83.9% White, 8.9% Black/African American, 3.6% Hispanic/Latino, 1.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.7% American Indian/Native American, 0.3% Other
- $M_{age} = 35.75$, $SD_{age} = 10.08$

Compensation

- Participants were paid \$2.50 for completing the survey
- Average completion time of 19 minutes, $SD = 15.76$, median of 13.58 minutes



Methods

Qualitative analysis used to code responses

Thematic analysis³ for translating recurring codes into common themes



Results

278 responses after data cleaning

85 codes generated

- Most frequent codes:
 - Caring (118), Empathetic (19)
 - Friendly (76) Kind (41)
 - Patience (22) Listener (47)
 - Communication (48)
 - Respect (26)

6 themes drawn



Themes

- 1) Caring and empathetic towards situation
- 2) Patient and attentive listener
- 3) Polite and clear communication
- 4) Confident in knowledge and treatment without contempt
- 5) Respectful and others-focused
- 6) Perceptive of self and limitations



Examples of Themes



Caring and empathetic towards situation

- “Good doctors are empathetic and make patients feel cared for.”
- “I think the doctor was humble because she seemed caring and understanding”
- “(...)empathetic to the concerns of their patients”
- “They were very attentive to the issues my mom described and he was empathetic and helpful however he could.”



Examples of Themes



Patient and attentive listener

- “Good doctors must be able to put their tools to good use. With their ears, they must hear all that the patient tells”
- “how he respond to questions showed he paid attention to what my aunt had ask even though it wasn't easy for her to make her point.”
- “The focus of the physician should always be on the patient's needs.”



Examples of Themes

Polite and clear communication

- “The doctor has an excellent bedside manner, by which I mean they are friendly, speak clearly (the patient is an 80 year old with poor hearing), and use normal English so as to be readily understandable.”
- “They asked a number of questions to demonstrate their personal curiosity. They did not rush through their examination and took their time. They explained everything thoroughly”



Examples of Themes

Confident in knowledge and treatment without contempt

- “Confident. Perhaps, more than any other quality, patients seemed to want to have a sense that their doctor knows what they're doing”
- “Doctor spoke in a soft voice, confidently. The doctor used simple words”



Examples of Themes

Respectful and others-focused

- “enables physicians to recognize and respect the expertise of others”
- “persistent in advocating for their patients”
- “respect people healthy or ill regardless of who they are, support patients and their loved one when they are needed”



Examples of Themes

Perceptive of self and limitations

- “(...)humble means to appreciate the limits of your abilities, understanding and importance.

For physicians, humility distinguishes between knowing what illness the patient has and what it means, and understanding how it feels to have it.”

- “respect, empathy, and critical self-reflection at both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels”



Discussion

Medical companions offer a new perspective of physician humility

Low frequency for non-humble ratings, potential of companion's influence

Other recurring themes suggest correlation between humility and positive outcomes for provider, patient, and companion

- Happiness
- Treatment quality
- Build character



Conclusion



Similar behaviors displayed in relation to physician humility as other humility research

- “Professional humility”

Physician humility potential to encourage positive outlook and optimism

Humility better facilitates doctor-patient communication

Encourages trust and builds rapport between physician, patient, and companion



Limitations and Future Directions



Limitations

- Sample demographics
- Qualitative response

Future Directions

- Analyze data for physician humility correlation with patient satisfaction to determine consistency with previous research
- Evaluate reverse correlations
- Further assess the role of medical companions in perceiving physician humility and patient outcomes
- Offer suggestions for how physicians should integrate medical companions into their patient health care





Thank you

Dr. Ho Phi Huynh

SHARe Research Lab

Student Research Symposium at Texas A&M University- San Antonio

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