

The 'WHOA!' model of reflection

Background

90% of medical students encounter a professional dilemma during their clinical placements¹. Some as soon as they enter the clinical environment². Medical students are less likely to report issues compared with nursing students¹, yet may experience considerable distress, particularly if they know what they should do but feel unable to act³.

Method

To help students develop their professional reasoning skills and therefore their confidence to act professionally, the 'WHOA!' model of reflection as developed as part of a collaborative project between medical students and staff.

The 'WHOA!' model provides a simple, easy to remember and structured approach to thinking through professional dilemmas.

Every time a student thinks 'WHOA, something is going on here that worries me', they can apply the framework in real time. Alternatively, it can be used *after* an experience to think more deeply about how to react in future.

The 'WHOA!' model



		Prompts
W	WHAT?!	What is happening here? Whose perspectives do I need to think about? (E.g. nurse, patient, rest of team). What principles (ethical/moral) are important to consider?
H	HELP?!	Who can I turn to for help? Is help needed?
O	OBSTACLES?	What might stop me from speaking up/acting in this situation?
A	ACTION!	What can I do next? What is the right thing to do?



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Pilot testing of model

A workshop was organised to test the model in action. 18 volunteer medical students worked through a variety of professionalism scenarios together and used the model to structure their thinking. They then provided feedback.

Question 1: Is the model useful to structure thinking? (likert scale of 1-10)
Student average: 8.3 (very useful)

Question 2: Does the model increase your confidence to act in these scenarios?
Student average: 6.5 (more confident)

Question 3: Does the model help you decide what action to take?
Student average: 6.1 (somewhat helps)

Question 4: Would you use this model?
Student average: 7.25 (most would use)

Free text comments on the model

'I like the simplicity of the model. It's easy to remember the four stages and does make you think properly about how you would respond in a situation.'

'Very useful structure which factors in multiple perspectives and promotes useful introspection in identifying obstacles. It still doesn't provide answers of course. But it is a useful model which can be applied in both the moment and after the event as a reflective and/or theoretical tool. It is also very brief; this is a good thing.'

'I think the model is a realistic representation of how you could actually think in these situations. It could guide you to come to a conclusion or what to do/should have done'

'Great way to help break down dilemmas. It made me think in a deeper level than I would have done without it'.

'I can imagine that a student with no previous ethical training would really benefit from the framework that the model provides. The only drawback is that the model doesn't necessarily tell you how or what to do in a situation, but having the action section is a useful reminder to act.'