Is the Australian Paramedic Discipline a Full Profession?

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Abstract

Introduction

Over the past century the Australian paramedic discipline has changed dramatically; moving from its origins of an ambulance driver to its current practitioner role and integral member of the Australian healthcare system. However, at present the Australian paramedic discipline is not considered a full profession. The issue of whether the discipline currently believes it is a profession, and if it wants to achieve full professional status will be examined. This paper has two objectives - to examine if the Australian paramedic membership views the discipline as a profession, and if paramedic community wants to be considered a profession within Australia.

Methods

A convenience sample was used for this study that included participants who attended the inaugural National Association Paramedic Academics in September, 2008. An investigation of professionalisation attitudes were investigated using a paper-based self-report questionnaire.

Results

A total of 63 experts participated in the study. Forty (63.5%) of the participants were male and 23 (36.5%) were female, with 44% of the participants (n=28) being between 35-44 years of age. The majority of the participants reported that the paramedic discipline would benefit from being recognised as a full profession (M=4.62, SD=.771) within Australia and that the higher education sector has an important part to play in this process (4.49, SD=0.74). The majority felt that national registration would not occur within the next 2 years (M=2.52, SD=1.12). A significant difference (p=0.001) between participants from Victoria, New Zealand and Queensland about whether the paramedic discipline would achieve national registration produced was noted.

Conclusion

The findings from the survey suggest two points in relation to professionalism of the paramedic discipline within Australia. Firstly, the paramedic discipline is not a profession and secondly, the paramedic discipline wants to become recognised as a profession. Other professional factors such as national registration, autonomy and the development of a unique body of knowledge require further investigation.

Keywords

higher; education; paramedic; profession; professionalisation; professionalism; registration

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