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EDITORIAL

Professional identities, culture and pillars

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Introduction

Sharing service developments, innovations, and insights from our work are key activities as the region endeavours to develop a research skilled workforce. One domain of the regional research strategy is to nurture our workforce (Biddle, 2024). The South West Clinical School Journal was established to encourage and support novice writers to write up and publish service-based evaluations (Underwood and Shawe, 2021). This is a core skill for practitioners to develop within the research pillar of their professional practice (NHSE, 2024).

Developing our research pillar requires us to consider our professional identity. Do we see ourselves as people who evaluate and reflect, who implement evidence into everyday work, who record and measure activity?

One national research strategy envisages a transformation of professional identities and culture (NHSE, 2023). The government's modernisation agenda and society's increasing expectations of healthcare require health and care professionals to reconfigure services, the means of delivery, and consequently our identities. We need service-based information at our fingertips to answer questions about the size, scale and scope of our services and their effectiveness.

Transforming beliefs, values and motivations for research and innovation

Health and care professions have traditionally viewed identity as a fixed entity emphasizing coherence, continuity and distinctiveness, with its acquisition being one of several necessary 'assets' for novices (Hammond, Cross and Moore, 2015). However, professional identity is an ongoing and dynamic process; we make sense and (re)interpret our professional self-concept based on ever-evolving attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences.

We co-construct the meaning of being a health and care professional within intra-professional and inter-professional communities of practice. Clients inform this, mediated through an unfolding career by workplace and institutional discourse, boundaries and hierarchies, and the contingencies of a life story. This co-construction is undertaken

through 'identity work', something we are doing consciously and unconsciously in the act of being a health and care professional. Identity work involves a constant and ongoing act of *becoming* of identity rather than of *having* an identity (Reissner & Armitage-Chan, 2024).

Research-related activity

As we grapple with the activities that form the research pillar of professional practice, for example, undertaking a clinical audit, writing it up, and publishing it, we are doing identity work. In doing so, practitioners can begin to see themselves anew, as people who evaluate and publish, who are generating a research pillar to help them to become the practitioner they want to be.

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