

# WHOA! A new reflective model for thinking through professionalism dilemmas

Doing the right thing as a Doctor



## Background

**90%** of medical students encounter a professional dilemma during their clinical placements,<sup>1</sup> with some occurring as soon as they enter the clinical environment.<sup>2</sup>

The WHOA! model of reflection was designed by staff and students as a simple, easy to remember structure to help medical students think through tricky situations.

The model encourages students to **reflect** on their **professional behaviour** and that of others. It encourages students to **seek help** where needed, identify what **barriers** might prevent them from doing the right thing, and **take action** if needed for the benefit of patients.

## The WHOA! model of reflection

<b>W What?</b>	What is going on? Whose perspectives do I need to consider? What ethical/moral principles are relevant here?
<b>H Help!</b>	Do I need help with this? Who can I turn to?
<b>O Obstacles?</b>	What might prevent me from speaking up/acting?
<b>A Action!</b>	What can I do next? What is the right thing to do?

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## Aim

To evaluate the usefulness of the WHOA! model to medical students.

## Methodology

An interactive workshop was developed in which medical students (n=18) used the WHOA! model to discuss a number of professionalism dilemmas based on real life situations encountered by medical students. Students then rated the model's usefulness.

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## Results

Overall, 77% of students said they would use the model in clinical training, and average rating of usefulness was high.

'The WHOA! model is a useful way of structuring my thinking'

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

Average rating: 8.3 – very useful

'The WHOA! model made me more confident in dealing with professional dilemmas'

1 2 3 4 5 **6** **7** 8 9 10

Average rating: 6.5 – more confident

'The WHOA! model helped me to decide what action to take'

1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

Average rating: 6.1 – somewhat helped

'I would use The WHOA! model'

1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10

Average rating: 7.25 – would very likely use model

*'I like the simplicity of the model. It's easy to remember the four stages and does make you think properly'*

*'Very useful structure which factors in multiple perspectives and promotes useful introspection in identifying obstacles'*

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

## Discussion

The WHOA! model provides a useful structure for students to think through professional dilemmas. Optimal usefulness in clinical practice is likely to occur when students also seek out professional guidance from General Medical Council documents as to how to act in different situations.

### References:

1. Monrouxe, L., Rees, C., Dennis, L. & Wells, S. (2015) *Professionalism dilemmas, moral distress and the healthcare student: insights from two online UK-wide Questionnaire studies*. *BMJ Open* Vol. 5 Issue 5
2. GMC (2011) *The state of the medical education in the UK* GMC

